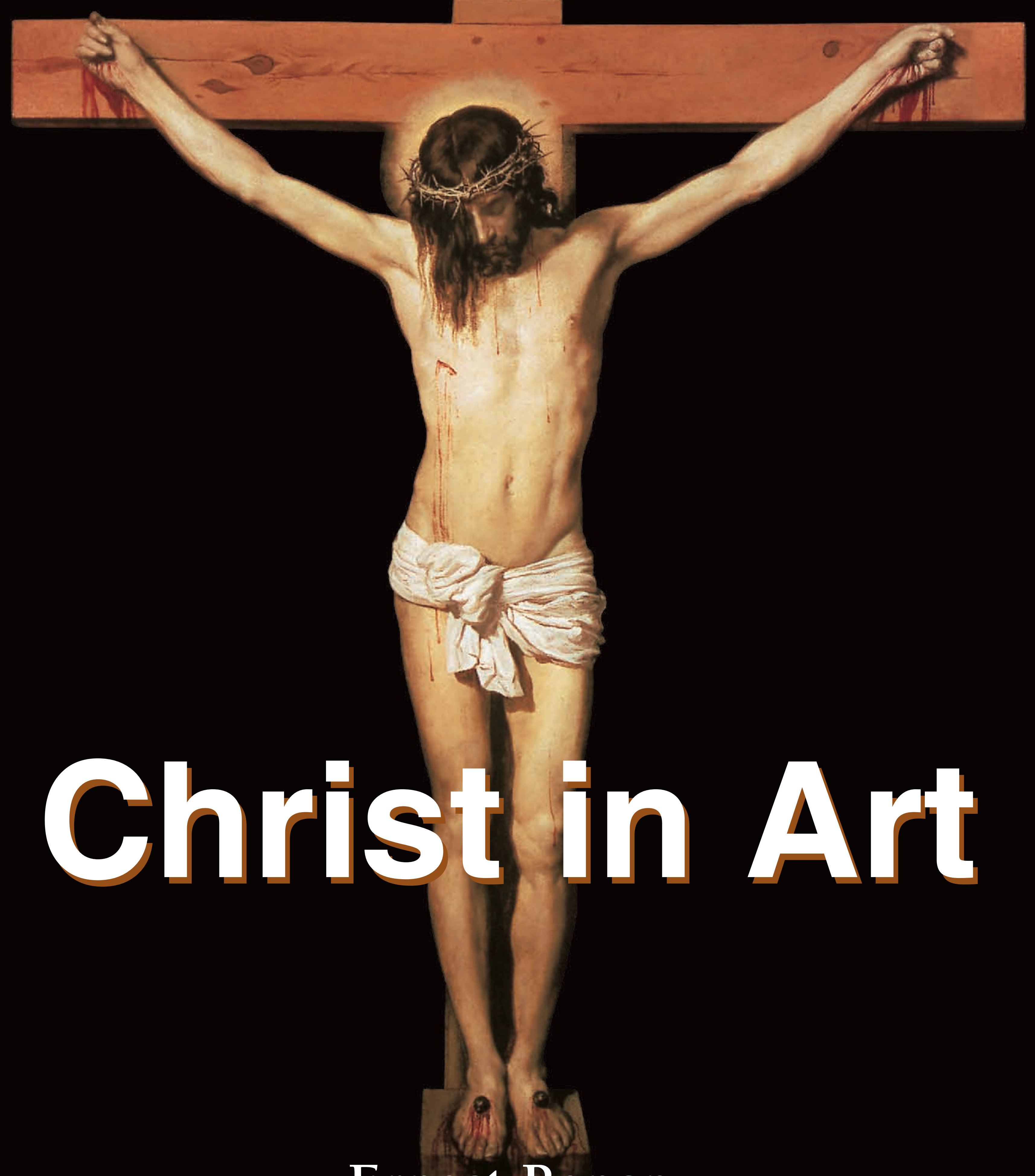


Christ in Art

Ernest Renan

Text: Ernest Renan

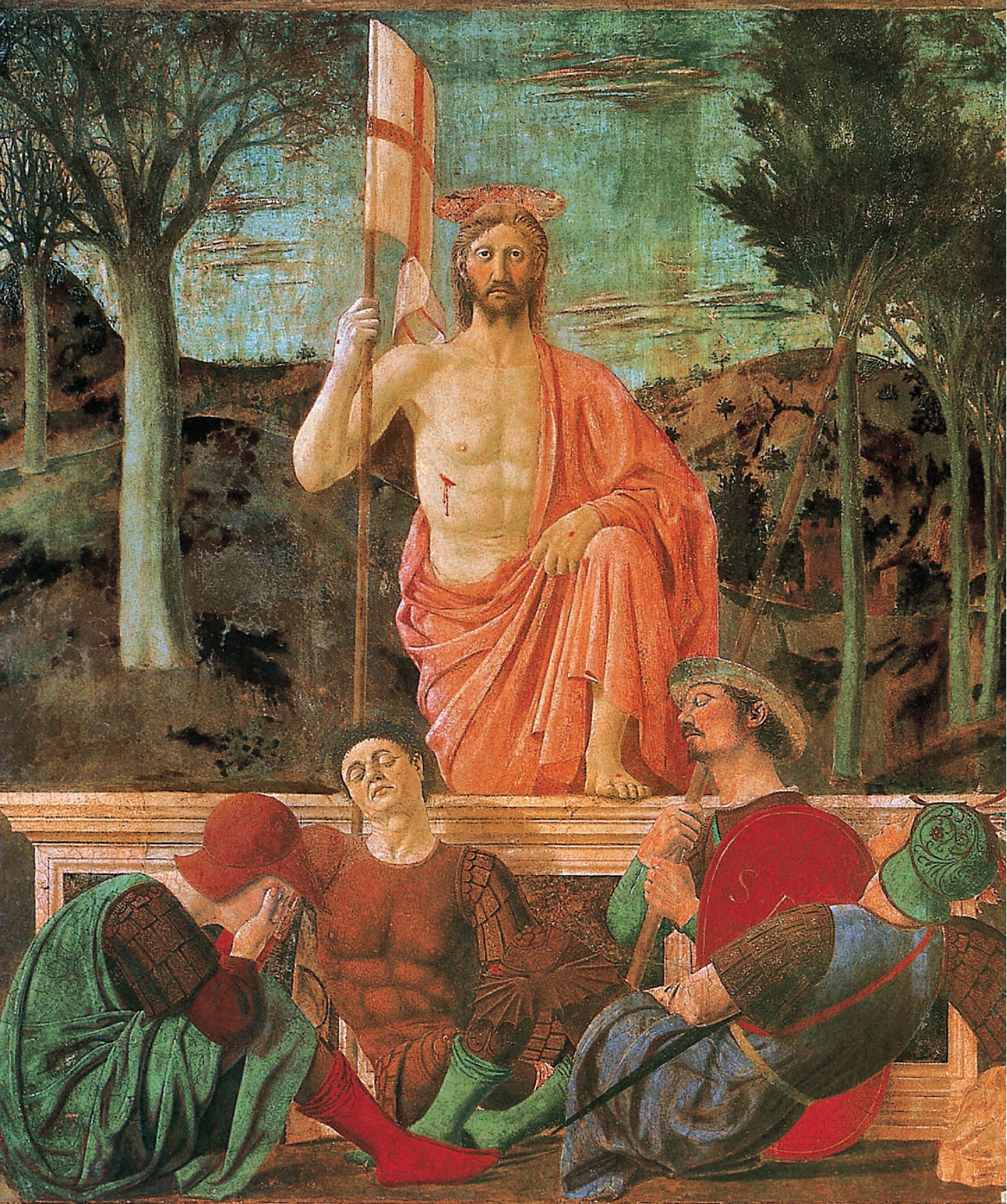
Layout:
Baseline Co Ltd
61A-63A Vo Van Tan Street
4th Floor
District 3, Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam

ISBN: 978-1-78042-877-2

Ernest Renan

Christ in Art





Contents



Origins of the Story of Christ

A history of the “Origins of Christianity” touches the obscure and subterranean period where it extends from the first beginnings of this religion to the time when its existence becomes a public, well-known fact, evident to the eyes of all men. Such a history consists of four books. The first, which I now present to the public, addresses the event that served as the starting-point of the new religion. The second will address the apostles and their immediate disciples, or rather the revolutions in religious thought of the first two Christian generations. I will close it about the year 100, when the last friends of Jesus have died, and all the books of the ‘New Testament have become fixed very nearly in the form in which we read them. The third book will set forth the condition of Christianity under the Antonines, slowly developing, and maintaining an almost permanent war against the empire, which having now reached the highest degree of administrative perfection and being governed by philosophers, combats in the infant sect of a secret and theocratic society that obstinately denies and incessantly undermines it. This book will comprise the whole of the second century. Finally, the fourth book will show the decisive progress of Christianity from the time of the Syrian emperors. In it, the construction of the Antonines will be seen falling to pieces, the decay of the ancient civilization becoming definitive, Christianity profiting by its ruin, Syria conquering the whole West, and Jesus, in company with the gods and divinized sages of Asia, taking possession of a society for which philosophy and a purely civil government no longer suffice. It is then that the religious ideas of the races grouped about the Mediterranean are radically modified. Oriental religions everywhere assume the ascendancy, Christianity, having become a mighty church, entirely forgets its millennial dreams, breaks its last connection with Judaism, and passes entirely into the Greek and Latin world. The literary struggles and labours of the third century, already public matters, will be set forth only in general terms.

I shall relate still more briefly the persecutions during the beginning of the fourth century, the last effort of the empire to return to its old principles, which were denied religious association in any place in the State. In conclusion, I shall merely foreshadow the change of policy which, under Constantine, inverted conditions and made the freest and most spontaneous religious movement an official religion, subjected to the State and persecuting in its turn.

I know not that I shall have enough of life and ability to complete a plan so vast. I shall be satisfied if, after having written the life of Jesus as I understand it, the history of the apostles, the condition of the Christian consciousness during the weeks which followed the death of Jesus, the formation of the legendary cycle of the resurrection, the first acts of the church of Jerusalem, the life of St. Paul, the crisis of the time of Nero, the vision of the Apocalypse, the fall of Jerusalem, the foundation of the Hebraic Christians of Batanea, the compilation of the gospels, the origin of the great schools of Asia Minor, sprung from John. Everything pales in comparison beside this marvellous first century.

Piero della Francesca, *Resurrection*, c. 1460.
Fresco, 225 x 200 cm.
Museo Civico, Sansepolcro. (p. 4)

The Face of Christ, late 15th century.
Papier-mâché, painted,
19 x 15, 5.5 cm.
Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht.



By a singularity rare in history, we see much more clearly what passed in the Christian world from the year 50 to the year 75, than from the year 100 to the year 150.

I believe that I have neglected, among ancient authorities, a source of information. Five great collections of writings, not to speak of a multitude of other scattered data, remain regarding Jesus and the time in which he lived. First, the gospels and the general writings of the New Testament; second, the compositions called the "Apocrypha of the Old Testament" third, the works of Philo; fourth, those of Josephus; fifth, the Talmud. The writings of Philo have the inestimable advantage of showing us what thoughts were fermenting in the time of Jesus in souls occupied with great religious questions. Philo lived, it is true, in quite another province of Judaism, but like Jesus he was free from the closed-mindedness which was prominent in Jerusalem; Philo is truly the elder brother of Jesus. He was sixty-two years old when the prophet of Nazareth was at the highest degree of his activity, and he survived him at least ten years. What a misfortune that the chances of life did not lead him into Galilee! What would he not have taught us!

Josephus, writing principally for the pagans, has not the same sincerity in his style. His brief notices of Jesus, John the Baptist, and Judas the Gaulonite, are dry and colourless. We feel that he is seeking to present these movements, thoroughly Jewish in character and spirit, under a form which may be intelligible to the Greeks and Romans. I think the passage on Jesus authentic. It is in the style of Josephus, and if this historian had made mention of Jesus, it would have been in that way. We perceive only that some Christian hand has retouched the fragment, has added a few words without

Adoration of the Magi, c. 200.
Fresco.
Capella Greca, Catacombs of Priscilla, Rome.



which it would have been almost blasphemous, and has perhaps curtailed or modified some expressions! We must remember that the literary fortune of Josephus was made by the Christians, who adopted his writings as documents essential to their sacred history. There was, probably in the second century, an edition corrected according to Christian ideals. But at all events, what constitutes the great interest of Josephus for the subject before us, is the vivid light which he throws upon the period. Thanks to him, Herod, Herodias, Antipater, Philip, Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate are persons upon whom we can put our finger, and whom we see living before us with striking reality.

The Apocrypha of the Old Testament, especially the Jewish portion of the Sibylline verses, and the Book of Enoch, taken with the Book of Daniel, are of cardinal importance for the history of the development of the Messianic theories and for the understanding of the conceptions of Jesus in regard to the kingdom of God. The Book of Enoch, in particular, which was very much read in the region of Jesus, gives the key to the expression "son of man," and the ideas which were associated with it. The age of these different books is now fixed beyond doubt. All now agree in placing the compilation of the more important of them in the second and first centuries before Christ. The date of the Book of Daniel is still more certain. The character of the two languages in which it is written; the use of Greek words; the clear announcement, determinate and dated, of events as late as the time of Antiochus Epiphanes; the false images of ancient Babylon traced in it; the general colouring of the book, which reminds us in no way of the writings of the captivity, which corresponds on the contrary, by a multitude of analogies, with the beliefs, the manners, and the peculiar fancies of the time of the Seleucids; the apocalyptic character of the visions. The place of the book in the Hebrew canon after

The Good Shepherd, c. 250.
Fresco.
Capella Greca, Catacombs of Priscilla,
Rome.

the series of the prophets, the omission of Daniel in the panegyrics of the twenty-ninth chapter of Ecclesiastes, in which his rank was indicated; many other evidences which have been deduced a hundred times and leave no doubt that the Book of Daniel was the fruit of the great exaltation produced among the Jews by the persecution of Antiochus. This book must not be classed in old prophetic literature, but rather at the head of the apocalyptic literature as the first model of a style of composition and the various sibylline poems, the Book of Enoch, the Apocalypse of John, the Ascension of Isaiah, and the fourth book of Esdras.

In the history of the origins of Christianity, the Talmud has been far too neglected. I think that the true idea of the circumstances amid which Jesus was brought forth must be sought in this strange compilation, where so much precious information is mingled with the most insignificant scholasticism. Christian theology and Jewish theology indeed followed two parallel paths; the history of either cannot be understood without the history of the other. Countless materials detail the gospels' finds, moreover, their commentary in the Talmud. The vast Latin collections of Lightfoot, Schoettgen, Buxtorf, and Otho contain a mass of such information. I have made it a rule to verify the original quotations which I have made without a single exception. The aid which has been rendered to me in this portion of my labour, by a learned Israelite, M. Neubauer, who is exceedingly well versed in Talmudic literature, has enabled me to go further, and to clear up the most delicate portions of my subject by some new comparisons. The distinction of epochs is very important, the compilation of the Talmud extending from the year 200 to the year 500 specifically. We have brought as much discrimination as is possible in the present condition of these studies. Such recent dates will cause some worries to those who are accustomed to accord value to a document only for the period in which it was written. But such scruples would be out of place. The teaching of the Jews from the Asmonean epoch to the second century was principally oral. We must not judge such intellectual conditions after the habitudes of a time in which much is written. The Vedas and the ancient Arab poems were preserved by memory for centuries, and yet these compositions present a very definite and very delicate form. In the Talmud, on the contrary, the form is of no account. We must add, that before the Mischna of Judah the Holy, which superseded all the rest, there were attempts at the compilation – the first of which dates back perhaps further than is commonly supposed. The style of the Talmud is that of running notes. The style of the Talmud is like that of course notes – the drafters probably filed all the entries that had accumulated in the various schools over generations under certain titles.

We have yet to speak of the documents which, being presented as biographies of the founder of Christianity, must of course hold first place in the life of Jesus. A complete treatise on the compilation of the gospels would be a volume of itself. Thanks to the thorough studies of which this question has been the subject for thirty years, a problem that would formerly have been deemed impossible, has reached a solution which leaves room for much uncertainty, but which is amply sufficient for the demands of history. We shall have occasion to return to this in our second book, the composition of the gospels having been one of the most important events to the future of Christianity which occurred during the second half of the first century. We shall here touch but a single phase of the subject, that which is indispensable to the substantiation of our narrative. Leaving aside all that belongs to the description of the apostolic times, we shall inquire only to what extent the data furnished by the gospels may be employed in a history projected upon rational principles.

The Good Shepherd, 4th century.
Marble, height: 43 cm, including base.
Museo Nazionale Romano, Rome.





Let the gospels be in part legendary, that is evident since they are full of miracles and the supernatural; but there are a different species of legends. Nobody doubts the principal traits of the life of Francis of Assisi, though, in it, the supernatural is met at every step. Nobody, on the contrary, gives credence to the "Life of Apollonius of Tyana," because it was written long after its hero, and under the conditions of a pure romance. At what period, by what hands, and under what conditions were the gospels compiled? This is the capital question upon which the opinion that we must form to their credibility depends.

We know that each of the four gospels bears at its head the name of a person known either in the apostolic history or in the gospel history itself. These four persons are not presented to us strictly as authors. The formulae "according to Matthew," "according to Mark," "according to Luke," and "according to John," do not imply that in the oldest opinion, these narratives had been written from one end to the other by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They signify only that those were the traditions coming from each of these apostles, and covered by their authority. It is clear that if these titles are exact, the gospels, without ceasing to be in part legendary, assume a high value since they carry us back to the half century following the death of Jesus, and even, in two cases, to eyewitness accounts of his acts.

As for Luke, doubt is hardly possible. Luke's gospel is a regular composition founded on anterior documents. It is the work of a man who selects, prunes, and combines. The author of this gospel is certainly the same as the author of the Acts of the Apostles. Now, the author of the Book of Acts is a companion of St Paul, a title perfectly fitting to Luke. I know that more than one objection may be interposed to this, but one thing at least is beyond doubt: that the author of the third gospel and of the Acts is a man of the second apostolic generation and that is enough for our purpose. The date of this gospel may, moreover, be determined with much precision by considerations drawn from the book itself. Chapter Twenty One, inseparable from the rest of the work, was certainly written after the siege of Jerusalem, and soon after. We are here, therefore, on firm ground; for we have a work written entirely by the same hand, and of the most perfect unity.

The gospels of Matthew and Mark are far from having the same individual seal. They are impersonal compositions, in which the author totally disappears. A proper name written at the head of such works does not mean much. But if the gospel of Luke is dated, those of Matthew and Mark are as well. It is certain that the third gospel is posterior to the first and presents the character of a much more advanced compilation. We have besides, in this respect, a most important testimonial of the first half of the second century. It is by Papias, bishop of Hierapolis, a man of weight, a man of tradition, who was all his life attentive to the collection of whatever could be learned of the person of Jesus. After declaring that in such a matter he prefers oral tradition to books, Papias mentions two written works on the words and deeds of Christ: first, a work of Mark, the interpreter of the apostle Peter, brief, incomplete, not arranged in chronological order, and comprising of narratives and sayings (λεχθενταηπραχθεντα) composed from the accounts and reminiscences of the apostle Peter; secondly, a collection of sayings (λογια) written in Hebrew by Matthew, "and which he has translated as best he could." Certain it is that these two descriptions correspond very well to the general physiognomy of the two books now called "The Gospel according to Matthew," and "The Gospel according to Mark," the first characterized by its long discourses; the second, full of anecdote, much more exact than the first in regard to minute acts, brief to dryness, poor in discourses and badly

The Good Shepherd (detail), c. 450.
Mosaic.
Galla Placidia Mausoleum, Ravenna.

Leo VI Prostrate before Christ in Majesty,
9th-10th century.
Mosaic.
Hagia Sophia, Istanbul. (pp. 14-15)





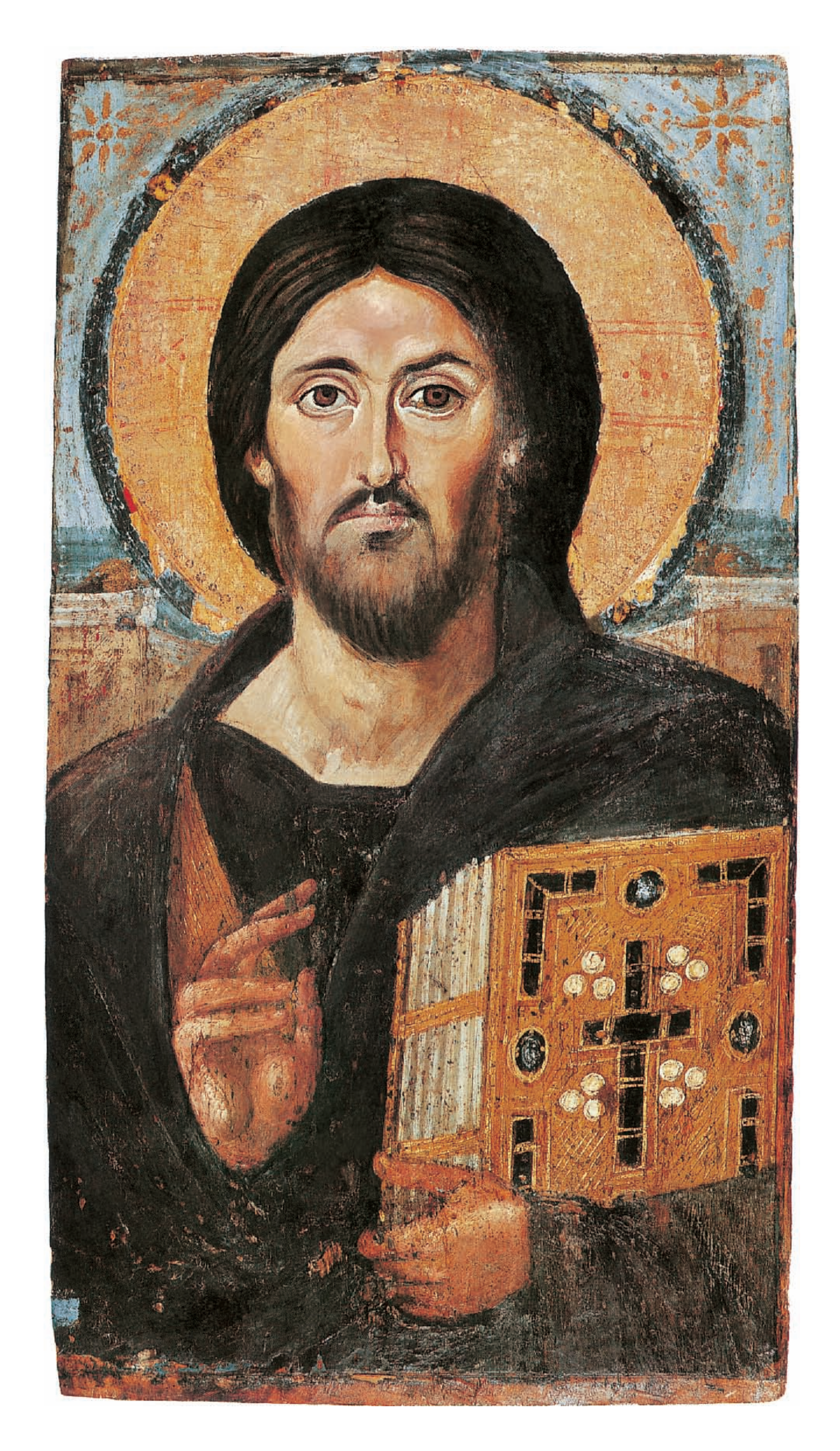
composed. These two works as we read them are absolutely similar to those which Papias read, and cannot be maintained in the first place, because the work of Matthew to Papias was composed exclusively of discourses in Hebrew, with translations that were varying considerably in circulation, and in the second place, because the work of Mark and that of Matthew were to him quite distinct, compiled without any concord, and, it seems, written in different languages. Now, in the present condition of the texts, the Gospel according to Matthew and the Gospel according to Mark present parallel passages so long and so perfectly identical that we must suppose that either the final compiler of the first had the second before him, or that both have copied the same prototype. What appears most probable is that neither that of Matthew nor that of Mark have the original compilations; that our two first gospels are already arrangements in which there has been an attempt to fill the hiatuses in one text by another. Each wished indeed to possess a complete copy. He who had only the discourses in his copy desired to have the narratives, and vice versa. Thus "the Gospel according to Matthew" is found to have incorporated nearly all the anecdotes of Mark, and "the Gospel according to Mark" now contains a multitude of traits which come from the Gospel of Matthew. Each drew largely from the evangelical traditions continuing about him. These traditions are so far from having been exhausted by the gospels that the Acts of the Apostles and the most ancient fathers quote many sayings of Jesus which appear authentic, yet which are not found in the gospels that we possess.

It is of small importance to the present object to carry this delicate analysis farther, and to endeavour to reconstruct in some manner, on the one hand, the original Logia of Matthew; on the other, the primitive narration as it flowed from the pen of Mark. The Logia are undoubtedly represented to us by the grand discourses of Jesus, which fill a considerable portion of the first gospel. These discourses form, indeed, when detached from the rest, a tolerably complete whole. As for the narratives of the first and second gospels, they seem to be based upon a common document, the text of which is found sometimes in one and sometimes in the other, and of which the second gospel, as we now find it, is but a slightly modified reproduction. In other words, the system of the life of Jesus with the synoptic rests upon two original documents: first, the discourses of Jesus collected by the apostle Matthew; second, the collection of anecdotes and personal information which Mark wrote from Peter's reminiscences. We may say that we now have these two documents, mingled with matter from other sources, in the two first gospels, which bear not wrongfully the name of "Gospel according to Matthew,:" and "Gospel according to Mark."

There is no doubt that early on the discourses of Jesus were reduced to writing in the Aramaic language, and that at an early age his remarkable deeds were recorded. These were not texts settled and fixed dogmatically. Besides the gospels which have reached us, there were a multitude of others professing to represent eyewitness accounts. Little importance was attached to these writings, and the collectors, like Papias, much preferred oral tradition. As they believed the world near its end, they cared little to compose books for the future; it was important only to preserve in their hearts the living image of him whom they hoped soon to see again in the clouds. Hence the little authority which the evangelical texts possessed for a hundred and fifty years. There was no scruple about inserting additions, combining them diversely, or completing some by others. The poor man who has one book, desires it to contain all that speaks to his heart. They lent these little rolls to one another: each transcribed on the margin of his copy the sayings and the parables which he found elsewhere, and which touched him. The finest thing in the world thus resulted from an obscure and entirely popular elaboration— no compilation

Deesis (detail), 1261.
Mosaic.
Hagia Sophia, Istanbul.







had absolute value. Justin, who often appeals to what he calls "the memoirs of the apostles," had before him a condition of the evangelical documents considerably differing from that which we have; at all events, he takes no care to cite them textually. The gospel quotations in the pseudo-Clementine writings of Ebionite origin present the same character. The spirit was everything and the letter nothing. It was when tradition grew weak in the latter half of the second century that the texts bearing the names of the apostles assumed decisive authority and obtained the force of law.

"Who does not see the preciousness of documents thus composed of the tender memories, of the simple recitals of the two first Christian generations, yet filled with the strong impression which the founder had made, and which seems long to have survived him? These gospels too, appear to come through that branch of the Christian family which was most closely allied with Jesus. The last compilation work, at least of the text which bears the name of Matthew, appears to have been done in one of the countries situated to the northeast of Palestine, such as Gaulonitis, Haouran or Batanea, where many Christians took refuge during the persecution by the Romans, where the relatives of Jesus were still found in the second century, and where the first Galilean direction was preserved longer than anywhere else.

Hitherto we have spoken only of the three gospels called synoptic. We must now speak of the fourth, which bears the name of John. Here is much more ground for doubt, and the question is less near a solution. Papias, who belonged to the school of John, and who, if he had not heard him, as Irenseus will have it, had attended much upon his immediate disciples, among others Aristion, and he who was called Presbyteros Joannes Papias, who had eagerly collected the oral narrations of this Aristion and

Christ Pantocrator, 6th century.
Encaustic, 84 x 45.5 cm.
Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai.

Trinity, Virgin Mary and Saint John,
c. 1250.
Altarpiece from the Wiesenkirche.
Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Berlin.

Presbyteros Joannes quotes not a word of a "Life of Jesus" written by John. Had any such mention been found in his work, Eusebius, who extracts from him all that is of value for the literary history of the apostolic century, would undoubtedly have remarked it. The intrinsic difficulties drawn from the reading of the fourth gospel itself are equally great. How is it that by the side of definite details, which savour so strongly of an eyewitness, we find such discourses, totally different from those of Matthew? How, by the side of a general plan of a life of Jesus, which appears much more satisfactory and exact than that of the synoptic, these singular passages in which we perceive a dogmatic interest peculiar to the compiler, ideas entirely foreign to Jesus and sometimes indications which put us on our guard as to the good faith of the narrator? How, in short, by the side of the purest, the most just, the most truly evangelical views, these spots in which we would fain to see the interpolations of an ardent sectary? Is it indeed John, the son of Zebedee, the brother of James, (of whom no single mention is made in the fourth gospel), who was able to write in Greek these lessons of abstract metaphysics to which neither the synoptic nor the Talmud present any analogy? All this is weighty, and, for my part, I dare not be certain, that the fourth gospel was written entirely by the pen of an ex-fisherman from Galilee. But that in substance this gospel issued towards the end of the first century, from the great school of Asia Minor, which held to John, a version of the Master's life, worthy of high consideration and often of preference demonstrated both by external evidence and by the examination of the document itself, in a manner that leaves nothing to be desired.

And first, there is no doubt that towards the year 150 the fourth gospel was in existence and was attributed to John. Formal texts of St. Justin, Theophilus of Antioch, and St. Irenseus show that from that time this gospel was used in all controversies and served as the cornerstone for the development of the doctrine. Irenseus was formal; now, Irenseus came from the school of John, and between him and the apostle there was only Polycarp. The part of this gospel in Gnosticism, and particularly in the system of Valentine, in Montanism was no less decisive. The school of John was on the course of which is most clearly seen during the second century. Now, this school cannot be understood if we do not place the fourth gospel at its very cradle. The first epistle also, attributed to St. John, is certainly by the same author as the fourth gospel; now the epistle is identified as John's by Polycarp, Papias, and Irenseus.

But above all the book itself is of an impressive character. The author speaks continually as an eyewitness as if he desires to pass for the apostle John. If, therefore, this work is not really by the apostle, we must admit a deception which the author confesses to himself. Now, although the ideas of that day were, in matters of literary honesty, essentially different from ours, we have no example in the apostolic world, of a forgery of this kind. Moreover, not only does the author desire to pass for the apostle John, but we see clearly that he writes in the interest of that apostle. On every page the intention is betrayed as if showing that he was the favourite of Jesus and that upon all the most solemn occasions (at the Supper, on Calvary, at the grave) he held the first place. The relations, fraternal on the whole, though not excluding a certain rivalry of the author with Peter, his hatred on the contrary to Judas, a hatred perhaps anterior to the betrayal which seemed to disclose themselves here and there.

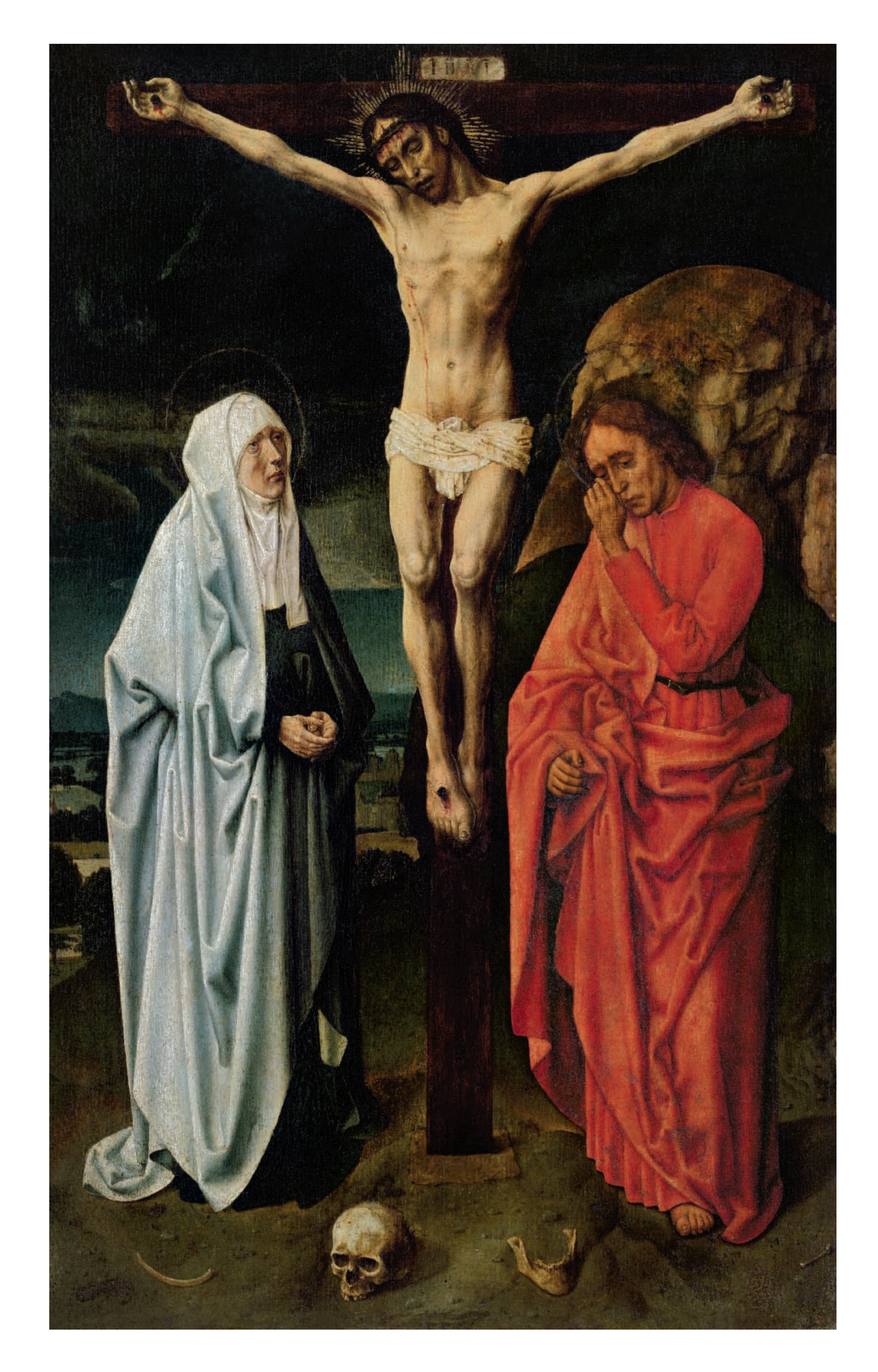
We are tempted to believe that John, in his old age, having read the evangelical narrations which were in circulation, remarked, on the one hand, various inaccuracies, and on the other hand was wounded at seeing that there had not been accorded to him a sufficiently prominent place in the history of Christ. Then he began to dictate many things which he knew better than the rest with the intention

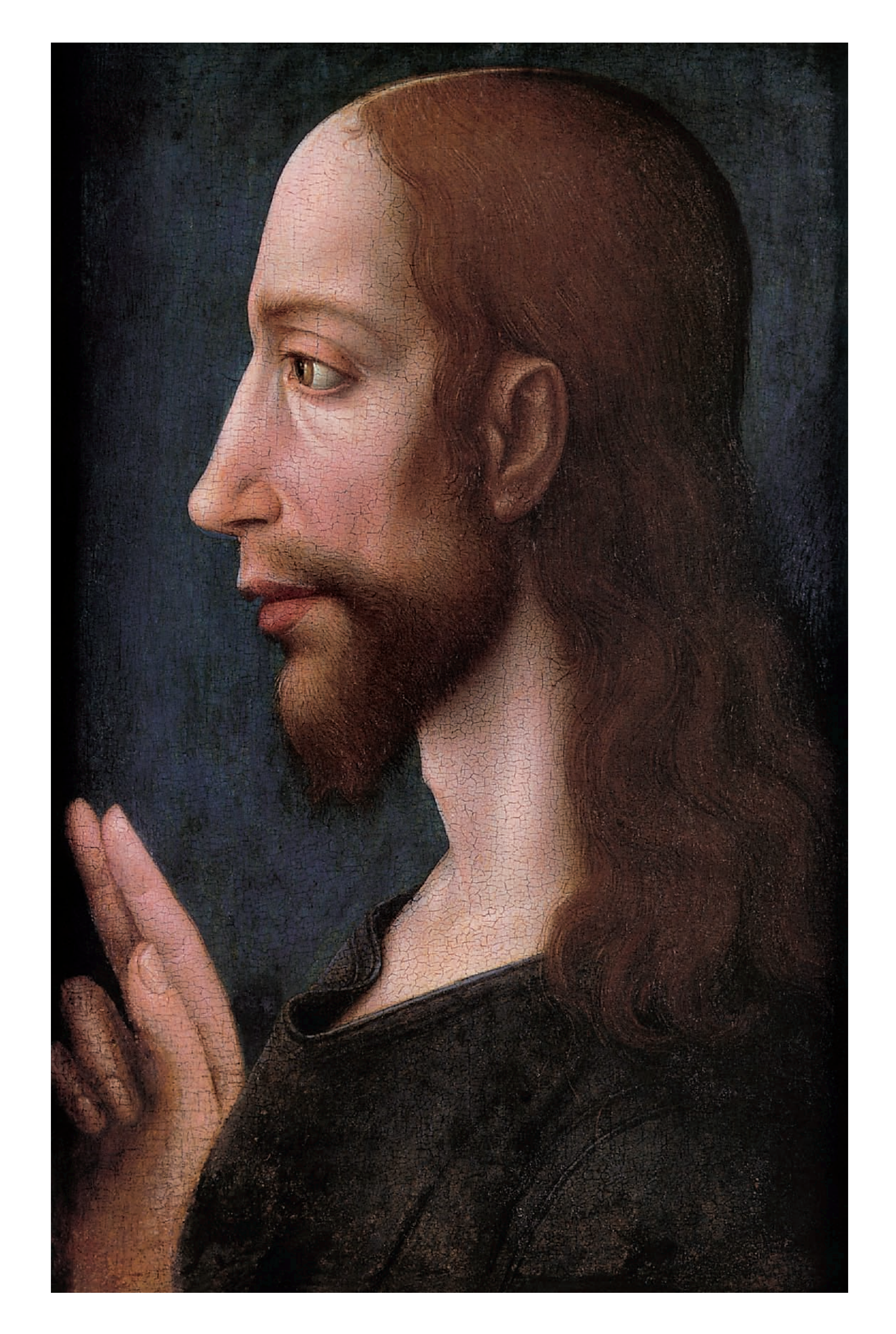
Christ Militant, c. 520.
Mosaic.
Museo Arcivescovile e Cappella di San Andrea, Ravenna.

Hugo Van der Goes, *The Crucifixion*, c. 1470.
Oil on panel.
Museo Correr, Venice. (p. 22)

Head of Christ and the Lentulus Letter, late 15th or early 16th century.
Oil on wood, 38.5 x 27.3 cm.
Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht. (p. 23)


EGO SVM VIA
VERITAS ET VITA







of showing that in a great number of cases in which mention had been made of Peter only, he had figured with and before him. Already in the lifetime of Jesus, this slight feeling of jealousy had betrayed itself between the sons of Zebedee and the other disciples. Since the death of James, his brother, John was the sole possessor of the affectionate memories of which these two disciples, by the confession of all, were the depositaries. Hence his perpetual care to keep in mind that he is the last surviving eyewitness, and the pleasure that he takes in relating circumstances with which he alone could be acquainted. Hence so many little traits of precision which seem like the scholiast of an annotator: “It was the sixth hour” “it was night” “the servant’s name was Malchus” “they had made a fire of coals, for it was cold” “now the coat was without seam”. Hence, finally, the disorder of the compilation, the irregularity of the progress, the disconnection of the first chapters were regulated. There are so many inexplicable things on the supposition that this gospel was only a theological thesis without any historical value, and which, on the contrary, are perfectly comprehensible, if we see in them, according to the tradition, the memories of an old man, sometimes of marvellous freshness, sometimes having suffered strange mutations.

A capital distinction, indeed, must be made in the gospel of John. On the one hand, this gospel presents to us a picture of the life of Jesus which differs considerably from that of the synoptics. On the other, he puts into the mouth of Jesus discourses, the tone, the style, the manner, the doctrines of which have nothing in common with the logia reported by the synoptics. Under this second relation the difference is so great that we must make a decided choice. If Jesus spoke as Matthew has it, he could not have spoken as John has it. Between the two authorities, no critic has hesitated, none will levitate. A thousand miles from the simple, disinterested, impersonal tone of the synoptic, the gospel of John discovers continually the preoccupations of the apologist, the afterthoughts of the sectary, the intention of proving a thesis and of convincing adversaries. Not by pretentious, heavy, badly-written tirades, saying little to the moral sense, did Jesus found his divine work. Even if Papias had not told us that Matthew wrote the sayings of Jesus in their original tongue, the naturalness, the ineffable truth, the peerless charm of the synoptic discourses, their thoroughly Hebraic manner, the analogies which they present to the sayings of the Jewish doctors of the same period, their perfect harmony with Galilean nature, all these characters, if we compare them with the obscure Gnosticism and the distorted metaphysics which fill the discourses of John, speak loudly enough. This does not mean that there are not in the discourses of John wonderful flashes of light, touches which come really from Jesus. But the mystic tone of these discourses corresponds in no wise to the character of the eloquence of Jesus such as we imagine it from the synoptic. A new spirit has come; Gnosticism has already commenced; the Galilean era of the kingdom of God is ended; the hope of the speedy coming of Christ grows dim; we are entering into the acridities of metaphysics, into the darkness of abstract dogma. The spirit of Jesus is not there, and if the son of Zebedee had really written these pages, he certainly had quite forgotten the writings of Lake Galilee and the charming conversations he had heard on the edges.

A circumstance, moreover, which fully proves that the discourses reported by the fourth gospel are not historic, but compositions intended to cover with the authority of Jesus, certain doctrines dear to the compiler, is their perfect harmony with the intellectual state of Asia Minor, at the time they were written. Asia Minor was then the theatre of a singular movement of syncretical philosophy; all the germs of Gnosticism were already in existence. John appears to have drunk from these foreign fountains. It may be that after the crises of the year 68 (the year the Book of Revelation is thought

Matthias Grünewald, *Resurrection*, from the *Isenheim Altarpiece* (detail), 1512-1516.
Musée Unterlinden, Colmar.

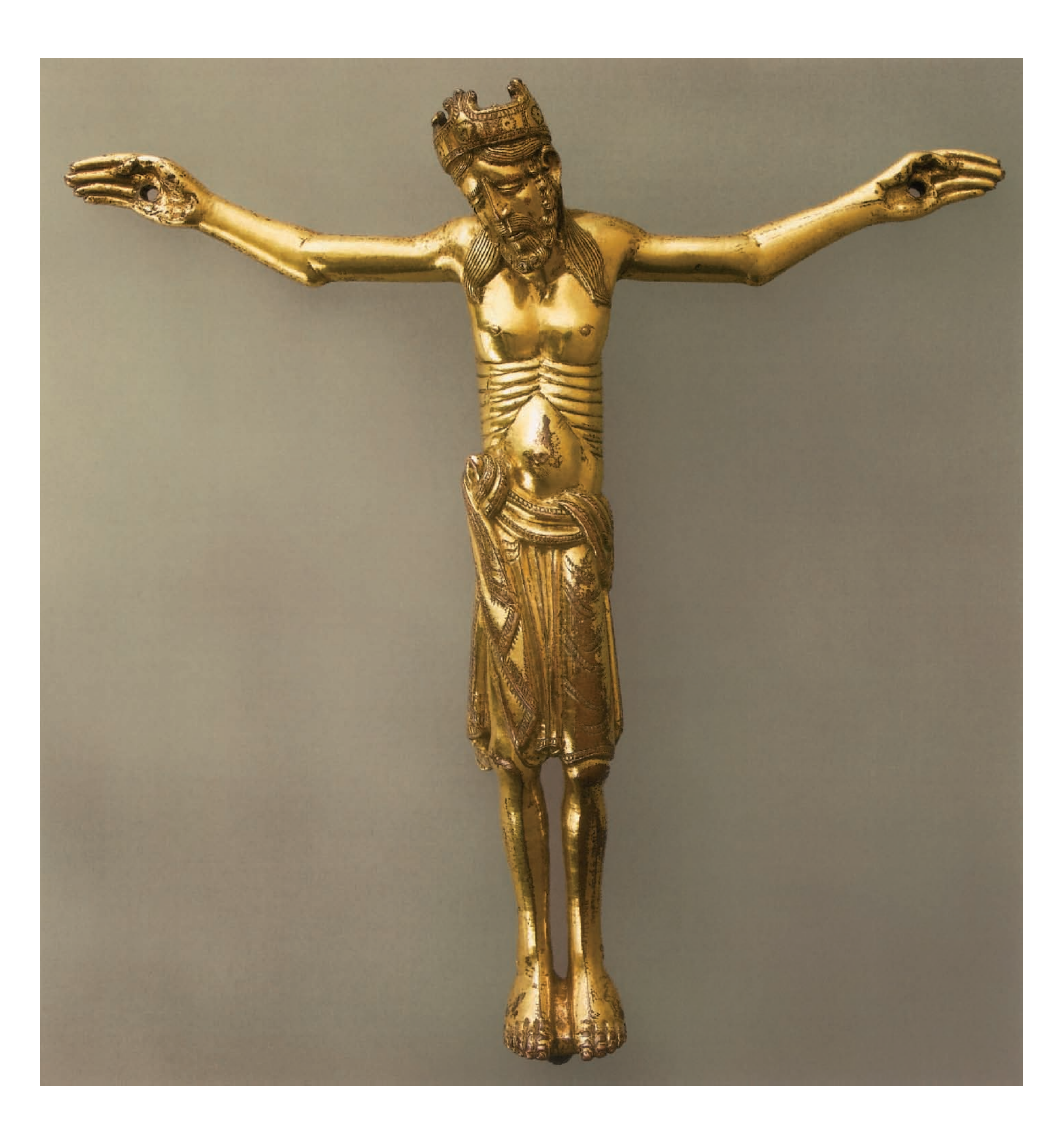
to have been written) and the year 70 (the fall of Jerusalem), the old apostle, with his ardent and mobile soul, disabused the belief in the speedy appearance of the Son of Man in the clouds, inclined towards the ideas which he found about him, a man who readily mixed certain Christian doctrines. In attributing these new ideas to Jesus, he followed a very natural inclination. Our memories are transformed with all the rest; the idea of a person whom we have known changes with us. Considering Jesus as the incarnation of truth, John could not but attribute to him what he had come to take for truth.

And now finally, we will add that probably John himself had small part in this, that this change was made around him rather than by him. We are sometimes tempted to believe those precious words, coming from the apostle, were employed by his disciples in a sense very different from the primitive evangelical spirit. Indeed, certain portions of the fourth gospel have been added afterwards; such as the entire twenty-first chapter, in which the author seems to have intended to render homage to the apostle Peter after his death, and to reply to the objections which might be, or which had already been, drawn from the death of John himself (v. 21-23). Several other passages bear traces of erasures and corrections.

It is impossible, at this distance, to possess the key of all these singular problems, and many surprises would be in reserve for us, could we penetrate into the secrets of this mysterious school of Ephesus, which more than once appears to have taken delight in obscure paths. But a decisive test is this. Every person who sits down to write the life of Jesus without a rigid theory as to the relative value of the gospels, allowing himself to be guided entirely by the sentiment of the subject, will be led in a multitude of cases to prefer the narrative of John to that of the synoptic. The last months of the life of Jesus in particular are explained only by John; many features of the Passion, that are unintelligible in other sources, assume in the relation of the fourth gospel, probability and possibility. On the contrary, I dare any person to compose a consistent life of Jesus, if he makes account of the discourses which John attributes to Jesus. This style of extolling himself and demonstrating himself incessantly, this perpetual argumentation, this scenic representation without simplicity, this long moralising at the end of each miracle, these stiff and awkward discourses, the tone of which is so often false and unequal, are unendurable to a man of taste by the side of the delicious sayings of the synoptic. We have here, evidently, artificial pieces which represent the teachings of Jesus, as the dialogues of Plato renders the conversation of Socrates. They are in some way variations of a musician improvising on his own account upon a given theme. The theme may be not without some authenticity, but in the execution, the artist gives his fantasy full play. We feel the factitious procedure, the rhetoric and the gloss.

Besides, the vocabulary of Jesus is not found in the fragments of which we are speaking. The expression “kingdom of God,” which was so familiar to the master, is seen only once. On the other hand, the style of the discourses attributed to Jesus by the fourth gospel present the most complete analogy to that of the epistles of St. John. We see that in writing his discourses the author followed, not his memories, but the rather monotonous movement of his own thought. An entire new mystic language was unfolded, a language of which the synoptic had not the least idea (“world,” “truth,” “life,” “light,” “darkness,” etc.). Had Jesus never spoken in this style, which has in it nothing Hebrew, nothing Jewish, nothing Talmudic, if I may so express myself, how could a single one of his listeners have kept the secret so well?

Christ on the Cross, mid-12th century.
Gilded bronze, 22 x 21.5 x 3.9 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.





Literary history furnishes, moreover, another example which presents the closest analogy with the historical phenomena that we have described, and which serves to explain it. Socrates, who, like Jesus, did not write, is known to us by two of his disciples, Xenophon and Plato, the first corresponding by his limpid, transparent, impersonal style, to the synoptic, the second reminding us, by his vigorous individuality, of the author of the fourth gospel. To set forth the Socratic teaching, must we follow the *Dialogues* of Plato, or the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon? There can be no doubt in regard to this; the whole world cleaves to the *Memorabilia*, and not to the *Dialogues*. Does Plato, however, teach us nothing in regard to Socrates?Would a careful critic, in writing the biography of the latter, neglect the *Dialogues* Who would dare to maintain that? The analogy, moreover, is not complete, and the difference is in favour of the fourth gospel.

The author of this gospel is, in fact, the better biographer. As if Plato, although attributing to his master fictitious discourses, knew most important things in regard to his life, of which Xenophon was entirely ignorant.

Without pronouncing upon the material question, what hand traced the fourth gospel, and even while inclining to believe that the discourses at least are not by the son of Zebedee, we admit, therefore, that this is really "the Gospel according to John," in the same sense as the first and second gospels are really the gospels "according to Matthew," and "according to Mark." The historical sketch of the fourth gospel is the life of Jesus as it was known in the school of John. It is the relation which Aristion and Presbyteros Joannes gave to Papias without telling him that it was written, or rather attaching no importance to that peculiarity. I will add that, in my opinion, this school was better acquainted with the external circumstances of the life of the founder than the group whose memories made up the synoptic gospels. It had, especially in regard to the sojourns of Jesus at Jerusalem, data which the others did not possess. The adherents of the school treated Mark as an indifferent biographer, and had invented a system to explain his hiatuses. Certain passages of Luke, in which there is an echo of the Johannic traditions, prove, moreover, that these traditions were not entirely unknown to the rest of the Christian family.

These elucidations will be sufficient, I think, to show, in the course of the narrative, the motives which were determined to give the preference to one or another of the four guides which we have for the life of Jesus. Upon the whole, I accept the four canonical gospels as authentic. All, in my judgment, date back to the first century, and they are substantially by the authors to whom they are attributed, but in historic value they are very unequal. Matthew clearly deserves unlimited confidence as regards to the discourses; he gives the Logia actual notes from a clear and living memory from the teaching of Jesus. A splendour at once soft and terrible, a divine power, if I may use the term, italicises these words, detaches them from the context, and renders them easily recognizable to the critic. He who attempts the task of forming a regular composition out of the gospel history possesses, in this respect, an excellent touchstone. The real words of Jesus will not be concealed. As soon as we touch them in this chaos of traditions of unequal value, we feel them vibrate and they come spontaneously, and take their own place in the narration, where they stand out in unparalleled relief.

The narrative portions grouped in the first gospel about this primitive knot, do not have the same authority. There are in them many legends of a rather flaccid contour, sprung from the piety of the second Christian generation. The gospel of Mark is much firmer, more precise, less cumbered with fables

Composite Icon with the Crucifixion, Christ in the Sepulchre, Saints and Gospel Scenes, 11th-12th century. State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.





Andrea Mantegna, *The Resurrection of Christ,* side panel of the San Zeno altar, c. 1457-1459.
Tempera on wood, 71 x 94 cm.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Tours.

of later insertion. Of the three synoptic, this has come to us the oldest, the most original, that to which fewest subsequent elements have been added. The material details in Mark have a precision which we seek in vain in the other evangelists. He is fond of reporting certain words of Jesus in Syro-Chaldaic. He is full of minute observations coming without any doubt from an eyewitness. Nothing opposes the idea that this eyewitness who evidently had followed Jesus, who had loved him and known him intimately, and who had a living remembrance of him, was the apostle Peter himself, as Papias says.

As to the work of Luke, it clearly has less historic value. It is a second-hand document. The narration is more mature. The sayings of Jesus are more premeditated, more composite. Some teachings are carried to excess and falsified. Writing out of Palestine, and certainly after the siege of Jerusalem, the author indicates places with less precision than the two other synoptic; he has a wrong idea of the temple which he imagines to be an oratory, whither men went to perform their devotions. He softens details, endeavouring to reconcile different accounts and he tones down passages which had become embarrassing from the standpoint of a more exalted idea of the divinity of Jesus. He exaggerates the marvellous, commits errors of chronology, he ignores Hebrew entirely, quotes no word of Jesus in this language, and calls all localities by their Greek names. We feel the compiler, the man who has not seen the witnesses himself, but who works upon texts, and allows himself to do great violence to them in order to reconcile them. Luke probably had before him the biographical collection of Mark and the Logia of Matthew. But he takes great liberties with them; sometimes he fuses two anecdotes or two parables into one. Sometimes he decomposes one into two and he interprets documents according to his personal understanding. He does not have the absolute impassibility of Matthew and Mark. We are able to say certain things in regard to his tastes and his peculiar tendencies: he is a very precise devotee, he makes it important that Jesus performed all the Jewish rites, he is an exalted democrat and Ebionite, that is, thoroughly opposed to property, and persuaded that the day of the poor is at hand, he is especially fond of all the anecdotes which place in relief the conversion of sinners, the exaltation of the humble and he often modifies the old traditions to give them this turn. He admits in his first pages legends in regard to the infancy of Jesus, told with these long amplifications, those canticles, those conventional methods which form the essential character of the apocryphal gospels. Finally, there are in the account of the last days of Jesus some circumstances full of tender feeling and certain words of Jesus of a delicious beauty, which are not found in the more authentic narratives, and in which we perceive the work of legend. Luke probably borrowed them from a more recent collection, the main object was to excite religious feeling.

Great reserve has of course been necessary in regard to a document of this kind. It would have been as uncritical to neglect it as to employ it without discrimination. Luke had before him originals which we do not possess. He is less an evangelist than a biographer of Jesus, a “harmonist,” after the manner of Marcion and Tatian. But he is a biographer of the first century, a divine artist, who, independently of the materials which he derived from more ancient sources, pictures to us the character of the founder, with a happiness in feature, and an inspiration in the whole, a relief which the other two synoptic do not have. His gospel has the greatest charm for the reader, for to the incomparable beauty of the common ground, he adds a portion of art and composition which singularly increases the effect of the portrait without seriously injuring its truth.

Upon the whole, we may say that the synoptic compilation has passed through three stages: first, the original documentary state first collections which no longer exist (λογια of Matthew, λεχθεντα η

Andrea Pisano, *South Portal Door,*
1330-1336.
Gilded bronze.
San Giovanni Baptistery, Florence.





πραχθεντα of Mark); second, the state of simple mixture, in which the original documents are amalgamated with no effort at composition, without disclosing any personal view on the part of the authors (the present gospels of Matthew and Mark); third, the state of combination or of intended and premeditated digestion, in which we perceive the effort to reconcile the different versions (Luke's gospel). The Gospel of John, as we have said, is a composition of a different order, and entirely peculiar.

It will be remarked that I have made no use of the apocryphal gospels. These compositions can in no way be put upon the same footing as the canonical gospels. They are flat and puerile amplifications, based upon the canonical gospels. On the contrary, I have been very careful to collect the fragments preserved by the Fathers of the Church of ancient gospels which once existed along with the canonical and which are now lost, such as the Gospel according to the Hebrews, the Gospel according to the Egyptians, and the Gospels called those of Justin, Marcion and Tatian, The two first are especially important in that they were written in Aramaic like the Logia of Matthew, that they appear to constitute a variety of the gospel of that apostle, and that they were the gospel of the Ebionim, that is, of those little Christian communities of Batanea who kept up the use of the Syro-Chaldaic, and who appear in some respects to have continued the line of Jesus. But it must be confessed, that in the state in which they have reached us, these gospels are inferior, for critical authority, to the form of Matthew's gospel which we possess.

The historic value which I attribute to the gospels is now, I think, quite understood. They are neither biographies after the manner of Suetonius nor fictitious legends. They are legendary biographies. I would compare them with the legends of the saints, the lives of Plotinus, Prochis, Isidorus, and other works of the same kind, in which historic truth and the intention of presenting models of virtue are combined in different degrees. Inaccuracy is one of the peculiarities of all popular compositions; it is especially perceptible in them. Suppose that ten years after the death of Napoleon, three or four old soldiers of the empire had each sat down to write the story of his life from memory. It is clear that their relations would present numerous errors and great discrepancies. One of them would put Wagram before Marengo; another would write without hesitation that Napoleon drove the government of Robespierre from the Tuileries; a third would omit expeditions of the highest importance. But one thing would certainly be realized with a good degree of truth from these artless relations – the character of the hero and the impression which he made upon those about him. In this view, such popular histories are better than formal, authoritative history. The same thing may be said of the gospels. Intent solely on setting prominently forth the excellence of the Master, his miracles and his teachings, the evangelists exhibit complete indifference to everything which is not the very spirit of Jesus. Contradictions as to times, places, persons were regarded as insignificant, because the higher the degree of inspiration attributed to the words of Jesus, the farther they were from according this inspiration to the narrators. These were looked upon simply as scribes and had but one rule: to omit nothing that they knew.

It is not necessarily contradictory that to some extent preconceived ideas must have mingled with these memories. Several stories, of Luke especially, were devised in order to bring out, vividly, certain traits of the physiognomy of Jesus. This physiognomy itself suffered changes every day. Jesus would be a phenomenon unique in history, if, with the part which he enacted, had not been transfigured early. The legend of Alexander was complete before the generation of his companions in arms was extinct; that of St. Francis of Assisi began while he was still alive. A rapid work of metamorphosis was also going on during the twenty or thirty years which followed the death of Jesus and imposed upon

Francisco de Zurbarán,
The Veil of Saint Veronica, c. 1635.
Oil on canvas, 70 x 51 cm.
Nationalmuseum, Stockholm.

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn,
Descent from the Cross, 1633.
Oil on panel, 89.4 x 65.2 cm.
Alte Pinakothek, Munich. (p. 36)

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn,
The Ascension of Christ, 1636.
Oil on canvas, 93 x 68.7 cm.
Alte Pinakothek, Munich. (p. 37)





his biography the absolute traits of an ideal legend. Death adds perfection to the most perfect man and it renders him faultless to those who have loved him. At the same time, moreover, that they wished to paint the Master, they wished to demonstrate him. Many anecdotes were conceived to prove that in him the prophecies considered as Messianic had been accomplished. But this process, the importance of which must not be denied, cannot explain all. No Jewish work of the time gives a series of prophecies precisely set forth which the Messiah was to accomplish. Many of the Messianic allusions seized upon by the evangelists are so subtle, so distorted, that we can believe only that all that corresponds to a doctrine generally admitted. Sometimes the reasoning was thus: "The Messiah was to do something specific: now Jesus is the Messiah; therefore Jesus has done a certain thing." Sometimes it was the opposite: "A certain thing happened to Jesus; now Jesus is the Messiah; therefore a certain thing was going to happen to the Messiah." Explanations that are too simple are always false in an analysis of the tissue of these profound creations of popular sentiment, which defy all systems by their richness and their infinite variety.

It is hardly necessary to say that with such documents, in order to give only what is incontestable we must limit ourselves to general lines. In nearly all ancient histories, even in those which are much less legendary than these, the details leave room for infinite doubt. When we have two accounts of the same act, it is extremely rare that the two accounts agree. Is not this a reason, when we have but one, for imagining many perplexities? We may say that among the anecdotes, the speeches, the celebrated sayings reported by the historians, not one is rigorously authentic. Were there stenographers to fix these fleeting words? Was there an annalist always present to note the gestures, the manner, or the feelings of the actor? Endeavour to arrive at the truth in regard to the manner in which this or that conveys that the event happened. Two accounts of the same quality given by eyewitnesses differ essentially. Must we therefore renounce all the colouring of narratives and confine ourselves to the general enunciation of facts? This would be to suppress history. Indeed, I do believe that, if we except certain short, almost mnemonic axioms, none of the discourses reported by Matthew are literal – our stenographed trials scarcely are. I willingly admit that this admirable relation of the Passion contains a multitude of approximations. Should we, however, write the life of Jesus omitting these teachings which represent so vividly the physiognomy of his discourses, and confine ourselves to saying with Josephus and Tacitus that "he was put to death by the order of Pilate at the instigation of the priests?" That would be, in my opinion, a species of inaccuracy worse than that to which we are exposed by admitting the details which the texts famish us. These details are not true to the letter; but they are true with a superior honesty; they are truer than the naked truth, in this sense, they are truth rendered expressive and eloquent, raised to the height of an idea.

I beg those persons who may think I have accorded too great a confidence to great legendary stories to remember the observation which I have just made. To what would the life of Alexander be reduced, were we to confine ourselves to that which is absolutely certain? Even the traditions that are in part erroneous contain a portion of truth which history cannot neglect. M. Sprenger has not been blamed for making, in writing the life of Muhammad, great account of the habits or oral traditions in regard to the prophet, or for often attributing literally to his hero sayings known only from this source. The traditions in regard to Muhammad, however, have no historical character superior to that of the discourses and narratives which compose the gospels. They were written between the year 50 and 140 of the Hegira. In writing the history of the Jewish schools during the centuries which immediately preceded and followed the birth of Christianity, we should have no scruples about attributing to Hillel,

Ridolfo Ghirlandaio, *The Procession to Calvary,* c. 1505.
Oil on canvas, transferred from wood, 166.4 x 161.3 cm.
National Gallery, London.





Schammai and Gamaliel the maxims which are assigned to them by the Misohna, although these great compilations were put into form several hundred years after the doctors in question.

As for those who believe, on the contrary, that history should be written by reproducing without interpretation the documents that have come down to us, I beg them to observe that in such a subject that is not permissible. The four principal documents are in flagrant contradiction with one with another; Josephus, moreover, sometimes corrects them. We must make a choice. To assert that an event could not have happened in two ways at once, nor in an impossible way, is not to impose upon history an *a priori* philosophy. When we possess several different versions of a single act, when credulity has mingled fabulous circumstances with all these versions, the historian should not conclude that the act is unreal; but he should in such cases be upon his guard, compare the texts and proceed by induction. There is in particular one class of relations to which this principle must necessarily be applied – supernatural relations. Seeking to explain these relations or to reduce them to legends, is not to mutilate the facts in the name of theory, it is to base ourselves upon the observation of facts. None of the miracles with which ancient histories are filled occurred under scientific conditions. Observation never once contradicted, teaches us that miracles occur only in periods and countries in which they are believed in and before persons disposed to believe in them. The miracle was ever performed before an assembly of men capable of establishing the miraculous character of an act. Neither men of the people nor men of the world are competent for that. Great precautions and a long habit of scientific research are requisite. Marvellous acts attested by every inhabitant of small towns have become, under a more severe scrutiny, acts of felony. If it is certain that no cotemporaneous miracle bears examination, is it not probable that the miracles of the past, all of which were performed in popular assemblages, would also present to us, were it possible for us to criticise them in detail, their share of illusion?

It is not therefore in the name of these different philosophies, but in the name of constant experience, that we banish miracle from history. We do not say “Miracle is impossible” we say, “there has been no miracle proved.” Let a thaumaturgist present himself tomorrow with testimony sufficiently important to merit our attention; let him announce that he is able to raise the dead; what would be done? A commission composed of physiologists, physicians, chemists, and persons experienced in historical criticism would be appointed. This commission would choose the corpse, make certain that death was real, designate the hall in which the experiment should be made, and regulate the whole system of precautions necessary to leave no room for doubt. If, under such conditions, the resurrection should be performed, a probability almost equal to certainty would be attained. However, as an experiment ought always be capable of being repeated, as one ought to be capable of doing again what one has done once, and as in the matter of miracles there can be no question of easy or difficult, the thaumaturgist would be invited to reproduce his marvellous act under other circumstances, upon other bodies, in another medium. If the miracle succeeds each time, two things would be proven: first, that supernatural acts do come to pass in the world; second, that the power to perform them belongs or is delegated to certain persons. But who does not see that no miracle was ever performed under such conditions; that always the thaumaturgist has chosen the subject of the experiment, chosen the means, chosen the public; that, moreover, it is, in most cases, the people themselves who from the undeniable need which they feel of seeing in great events and great men something divine, create the marvellous legends afterwards. Till we have new light, we shall maintain, therefore, this principle of historical criticism, that a supernatural relation cannot be accepted as such, that it always implies

Arthur Hughes, *The Nativity,* 1858.
Oil on canvas, 61.2 x 35.8 cm.
Birmingham Museums and Art Gallery, Birmingham.

credulity or imposture, that the duty of the historian is to interpret it, and to seek what portion of truth and what portion of error it may contain.

Such are the rules which have been followed in the composition of this life. For the reading of the texts I have been able to add a fresh source of light, an examination of the places in which the events occurred. I have visited Jerusalem, Hebron, and Samaria; scarcely any locality important in the history of Jesus has escaped me. All this history which, at a distance, seems to be floating in the clouds of an unreal world, thus assumed a body, a solidity which astonished me. The striking accord of the texts and the places, the wonderful harmony of the evangelical ideal with the landscape which served as its setting, were to me as a revelation. I had before my eyes a fifth gospel, torn but still legible, and thenceforth, through the narratives of Matthew and Mark, instead of an abstract being, which one would say had never existed, I saw a wonderful human form live and move. During the summer, having been compelled to go up to Ghazir in Mount Lebanon to take a rest, I fixed with rapid strokes the image which had appeared to me, and the result was this book. When a cruel fate intervened to hasten my departure, I had but few pages left to write. The book has been, in this way, composed entirely near the very place where Jesus was born and raised. Since my return, I have laboured incessantly to verify and to test in detail the sketch which I had written in haste in a Maronite hut with five or six volumes about me.

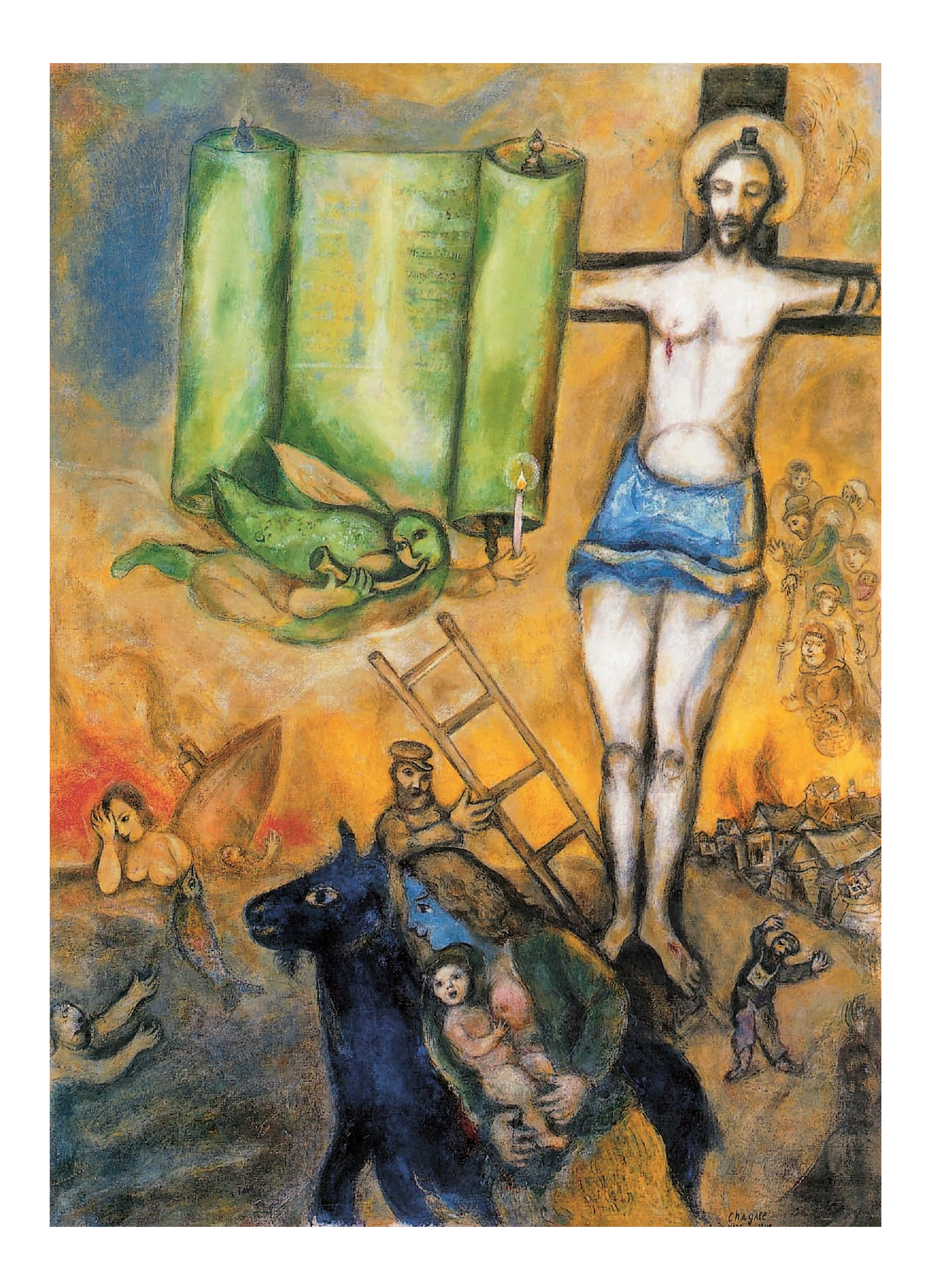
Many will, perhaps, regret the biographical form which has thus been given to my work. When I for the first time conceived a history of Christianity, what I wished to write was in fact a history of doctrines, in which men would have had scarcely any part. Jesus would hardly have been named; I should have endeavoured, above all, to show how the ideas which were produced under his name, germinated and spread over the world. But I have learned since, that history is not a mere play of abstractions, that in it men are more than doctrines. It was not a certain theory in regard to justification and redemption which produced the Reformation; it was Luther, and it was Calvin. Parseeism, Hellenism, Judaism, might have combined in all forms the doctrines of the resurrection and the word might have been developed for centuries without producing this fecund, unique fact, which is called Christianity. This fact is the work of Jesus, of St. Paul, of St. John. To write the history of Jesus, St. Paul and St. John, is to write the history of the origins of Christianity. The previous movements belong to our subject only in so far as they serve to throw light upon these extraordinary men, who must of course have had some kind relationship with what preceded them. In such an effort to revive the lofty souls of the past, we must be permitted to some extent to divine and conjecture. A great life is an organic whole which cannot be represented by the simple agglomeration of little facts. A deep feeling must embrace the whole and form its unity. The method of art in such a subject is a good guide; the exquisite tact of a Goethe would here find full scope. The essential conditions of art creations is to form a living system of every portion which answers and demands every other. In histories of this kind, the great sign that we have attained the truth is success in combining the texts so as to constitute a logical, probable, concordant narrative. The intimate laws of life, of the advance of organic products, and of the toning down of shades, must be consulted at every step. What we have here to find is not the material circumstance that is impossible to verify, but the very soul of history. What we have to seek is not the petty certainty of the meticulous, but the justness of the general idea, the truth of the colouring. Each touch which violates the rites of classic narration should warn us to beware. The feat which we had to narrate was living, natural and harmonious. If we do not succeed in rendering it such in our narration, surely it is because we have not attained the right view of it.

Salvator Rosa, *The Resurrected Christ,* date unknown.
Oil on wood, 109 x 96 cm.
Musée Condé, Chatilly.

Marc Chagall, *Yellow Crucifixion,* 1943.
Centre Georges-Pompidou, Paris. (p. 44)

Emil Nolde, *The Last Supper,* 1909.
Oil on canvas, 86 x 107 cm.
Statens Museum for Kunst,
Copenhagen. (p. 45)







Suppose that in restoring the Minerva of Phidias according to the texts, an unnatural, maimed, artificial whole should be produced; what must we conclude from there? Only one thing: that the texts demand artistic interpretation, that they must be gently treated until they finally combine to produce a whole in which all the materials are happily fused. Should we be sure of having then, feature for feature, the Greek statue? No; but at least we would not have a caricature. We would have the general spirit of the work, one of the forms in which it may have existed.

This sense of a living organism has not hesitated to be guided in the general structure of the narrative. The reading of the gospels is enough to show that their authors, though they had in their minds a very just plan of the life of Jesus, were not guided by very rigorous chronological data. Papias, moreover, tells us so expressly that the expressions: “In those days”, “after that”, “then”, and “it came to pass that”, etc. are simple transitions designed to connect the different stories. To leave all the materials furnished to us by the evangelists in the disorder in which tradition gives them, would no more be to write the history of Jesus than one would write the history of a celebrated man by giving promiscuously the letters and anecdotes of his youth, his old age, and his prime. The Koran, which also presents to us in fragments the different periods of the life of Mohammed, has yielded its secret to an ingenious criticism; the chronological order in which these fragments were composed, which has been discovered with approximate certainty. Such a readjustment is much more difficult for the gospel, the public life of Jesus having been shorter and less crowded with events than the life of the founder of Islam. However, the attempt to find a clue by which to guide our steps in this labyrinth, cannot be taxed with gratuitous subtlety. It is no great abuse of hypotheses to suppose that a religious founder begins by adopting the moral aphorisms which are already in circulation in his time, and the practices which are most prevalent; that, when more mature, and in possession of his full powers, he takes pleasure in a species of calm, poetic eloquence, far removed from all controversy, suave and free as pure sentiment. He gradually becomes exalted, excited by opposition, and ends in polemics and strong invective. Such are the periods which have been distinguished in the Koran. He adopted with an exquisite tact by the synoptic, supposes an analogous progress. Read Matthew attentively, and there will be and in the distribution of the discourses, a gradation strongly analogous to that which we have just indicated. There will be observed, moreover, the difference in forms of expression of which we make use when we attempt to explain the progress of the ideas of Jesus. The reader may, if he prefers, see in the divisions adopted in this regard, only the sections indispensable to the methodical exposition of a profound and complex mind.

If the love of a subject may assist in its comprehension, it will also be recognized that this condition has not been wanting. To write the history of a religion, it is necessary, first, to have believed it; and secondly, to believe it no longer implicitly; for implicit faith is incompatible with sincere history. But love goes without faith. Because we do not attach ourselves to any of the forms that captivate human adoration, we do not renounce the enjoyment of all that is good and beautiful in them. No passing vision exhausts divinity; God was revealed before Jesus, God will be revealed after him. Widely unequal and so much the more divine, as they are the greater and the more spontaneous, the manifestations of the God concealed in the depths of the human conscience are all of the same order. Jesus cannot therefore, belong exclusively to those who call themselves his disciples. He is the honor that every man carries in his heart. His glory cannot be lost to history and his legacy and following are made more real by showing that history would be incomprehensible without him.

Graham Sutherland, *Christ in Glory in the Tetramorph (First Cartoon),* 1953.
Oil on gouache on board,
201.9 x 110.5 cm.
Herbert Art Gallery, Coventry.





The Young Christ

His First Impressions

Jesus was born in Nazareth, a small town in Galilee, which before him was unknown. All his life he was designated by the name of "Nazarene," and it is only by an awkward detour that the legend succeeds in fixing his birth at Bethlehem. We shall further on see the motive of this supposition and how it was the necessary consequence of the Messianic character attributed to Jesus. The precise date of his birth is unknown. It occurred under the reign of Augustus, towards the year 750 of Rome, probably sometime in the years before 1 C. E., when most Western peoples place his birth.

He came from the ranks of the people. His father Joseph and his mother Mary were in moderate circumstances, artisans living by their toil, a very common condition in the East, which is neither ease nor want. The extreme simplicity of life in such countries, by removing the demand for comfort, renders the privilege of the rich almost useless and makes all voluntarily poor. The town of Nazareth, in the time of Jesus, did not, perhaps, differ much from what it is today. We see the streets in which he played when a child, in these stony paths or small squares which separate the dwellings. The house of Joseph, without a doubt, closely resembled those poor shops, lighted by the door, serving at once for the work-bench, as kitchen and as bedroom, having for furniture a mat, some cushions on the ground, one or two earthen vessels and a painted chest.

The family, whether the product of one or more marriages, was rather numerous. Jesus had brothers and sisters, who seem to have been younger than he. All remain unknown, and it appears that the four persons who are named as his brothers, and among whom one at least, James, attained great importance in the first years of the development of Christianity. Mary, indeed, had a sister named Mary a1so, who married a certain Alpheus or Oleophas (these two names appear to designate the same person) and was the mother of several sons who played a very considerable part among the first disciples of Jesus. His second cousins, who adhered to the young master, while his real brothers were opposed to him, assumed the title of "brothers of the Lord." The real brothers of Jesus, as well as their mother, had no importance until after his death. Even then they do not appear to have equalled their cousins in consideration whose conversion had been more spontaneous, and whose character appears to have had more originality. His sisters married at Nazareth, and there he spent his early years. Nazareth was a little town, situated in a fold of land broadly open at the summit of the group of mountains which closes on the north the plain of the Jezreel Valley. The population was from three to four thousand. It is quite cold in the winter and the climate is very healthy. The people are friendly and good-natured; the gardens are fresh and green. Antoninus Martyr draws an enchanting picture of the fertility of the environs, which he compares to paradise. Some valleys on the western side fully justify his description. The fountain from which the life and gaiety of the little town formerly centred has been destroyed; its broken channels now only produce a turbid water.

Having attained a better idea of what constitutes respect for origins, one shall desire to substitute authentic holy places for the mean and apocryphal sanctuaries which were seized upon by the piety of the barbarous ages, it is upon this height of Nazareth that it will build its temple. There, at the point of advent of Christianity, and at the centre of action of its founder, should rise the great church in which

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio,
The Holy Family, c. 1607.
Oil on canvas, 117.5 x 96 cm.
Collection Clara Otero Silva, Caracas.

all Christians might pray. There also, upon this soil in which sleeps Joseph the carpenter, and thousands of forgotten Nazarenes, who have never crossed the horizon of their valley, the philosopher would be better situated than in any other place in the world, to contemplate the course of human things to find consolation for their uncertainty, to find faith in the divine object which the world pursues through innumerable dejections, and notwithstanding the vanity of all things.

The Education of Jesus

This nature at once smiling and grand, was the whole education of Jesus. He learned to read and write, no doubt according to the method of the East, which consists of putting into the hands of the child a book, that he repeats in concert with his little school-fellows until he knows it by heart. It is doubtful, however, whether he really understood the Hebrew writings in their original tongue. The biographies make him quote from them in the Aramaic tongue; his principles of exegesis, as nearly as we can make them out from those of his disciples, closely resembled those which were current at that time, and which compose the spirit of the Targums and the Midrash.

The schoolmaster in the small Jewish towns was the hazzan or reader of the synagogue. Jesus attended little upon the higher schools of the scribes and he did not have any of those titles which confer in the eyes of the common people the privileges of learning. It would be a great mistake, however, to suppose that Jesus was what we call illiterate. The education of the schools marks among us a wide distinction, in the relation of personal worth, between those who have received it and those who have been deprived of it. It was not thus in the East, nor generally in the good old ages.

It is not probable that he knew Greek. This language was little known in Judea beyond the classes given by the government in the towns inhabited by pagans, like Cesarea. The native language of Jesus was a Syrian dialect mixed with Hebrew, which was then spoken in Palestine. This culture was proscribed by the Palestinian doctors, who “united in the same malediction he who breeds swine and he who teaches his son the wisdom of the Greeks.” At all events, it had not penetrated into little towns like Nazareth. Notwithstanding the anathema of the doctors, it is true, some Jews had already embraced the Hellenic culture. Not to speak of the Jewish school of Egypt, in which attempts to amalgamate Hellenism and Judaism had been continued for nearly two hundred years. Nicholas of Damascus had become at this very time one of the most distinguished, most learned and most honoured men of his age. It is certain that in Jerusalem, Greek was very little studied, that Greek studies were considered dangerous and even servile; that they were declared good at most as an ornament for women. The study of the Law alone was considered liberal and worthy of a serious man. A learned rabbi, when asked at what time it was proper to teach children “the wisdom of the Greeks,” he answered: “At the hour which is neither day nor night, for it is written of the Law: Thou shalt study it day and night.”

Neither directly nor indirectly, therefore, did any element of Hellenic culture make its way to Jesus. He knew nothing beyond Judaism, his mind preserved this frank simplicity which was always enfeebled by an extensive and varied culture. In the very bosom of Judaism, he was still a stranger to many efforts some of which were parallel to his own. On one hand, the asceticism of the Essenes, or Therapeutes, on the other, the fine essays in religious philosophy, made by the Jewish school of Alexandria, and ingeniously interpreted by Philo, were to him unknown.

The Nativity, detail of *The Story of the Youth of Christ*, 1140-1145.
Stained glass window.
Ambulatory, Basilica of St. Denis, Saint-Denis.

Virgin of Montserrat, also known as *La Moreneta*, 12th century.
Wood.
Abbey of Santa Maria de Montserrat, Catalonia. (p. 52)

Donatello, *Virgin and Child*, 1440.
Terracotta, height: 158.2 cm.
Museo Nazionale del Bargello, Florence. (p. 53)









Luckily for him, he knew no more of the grotesque scholasticism which was taught in Jerusalem, and which was soon to constitute the Talmud. If a few Pharisees had already brought it to Galilee, he did not attend upon them, and when he afterwards came in contact with this silly casuistry, it inspired in him nothing but disgust.

The reading of the books of the Old Testament produced upon him much greater impression. The canon of the sacred books was composed of two principal parts— the Law, that is, the Pentateuch, and the Prophets as we now possess them. A vast allegorical exegesis was applied to all these books, and sought to extract what is not in them, but what responded to the aspirations of the time. The Law, which represented, not the ancient laws of the country, but rather Utopias, the factitious laws and the pious frauds of the time of the pietistic kings, had become, since the nation had ceased to govern itself, an inexhaustible theme of subtle interpretations. As to the prophets and psalms, they were persuaded that nearly all the allusions in these books which were even slightly mysterious were related to the Messiah, and they sought in advance the type of him who was to realize the hopes of the nation. Jesus shared the universal taste for these allegorical interpretations. But the real poetry of the Bible, which was lost to the foolish expositors of Jerusalem, was fully revealed to his exquisite genius. The Law appears to have been of little interest to him; he thought he could do better. But the religious poetry of the psalms was in wonderful harmony with his lyrical soul. All his life they were his sustenance and his support. The prophets, Isaiah in particular, and his continuator of the time of the captivity, with their splendid dreams of the future, their impetuous eloquence and their invectives intermingled with enchanting pictures, were his real teachers. Undoubtedly he read also many modern writings, whose authors, to gain an authority now accorded only to very ancient writing, hid themselves beneath the names of prophets and patriarchs. One of these books made a deep impression upon him, the book of Daniel. This book, composed by an exalted Jew of the time of Antiochus Epiphanes, and placed by him under the shelter of an ancient sage, was the summing up of the spirit of the latter days. Its author, the real creator of the philosophy of history, for the first time dared to see in the movement of the world, and the succession of empires, merely a function subordinate to the destiny of the Jewish people. Jesus was at an early period thrilled by these lofty hopes. Perhaps also, he read the books of Enoch, then revered equally with the sacred books and the other writings of the same kind that upheld so great a movement in the popular imagination. The advent of the Messiah with his glories and his terrors, the nations dashing one against another, the cataclysm of heaven and earth, were the familiar food of his imagination. These revolutions were thought to be at hand, so that a multitude of people were seeking to compute their times, the supernatural order of things into which such visions transport us, appeared to him from the first perfectly simple and natural. That he had no knowledge of the general condition of the world that may be learned from every line of his most authentic discourses. The earth to him appears still to be divided into kingdoms which are at war; he seems to be ignorant of the "Roman peace," and the new state of society which his century inaugurated. He had no precise idea of the Roman power; the name of "Caesar" alone had reached him. The court of the kings seemed to him a place where people wore fine clothes. The charming impossibilities with which his parables swarmed, when he put kings and mighty men upon the scene it proves that he had no conception of aristocratic society except that of a young villager who sees the world through the prism of his own simplicity.

Still he was less acquainted with the new idea, created by Greek science, which is the basis of all philosophy and which modern science has fully confirmed, the exclusion of the capricious gods to whom the early faith of the ancient ages attributed the government of the universe. The negation of miracle, this idea that everything is produced in the world by laws in which the personal intervention

Giotto di Bondone, *Madonna and Child Enthroned with Angels and Saints*, also known as the *Ognissanti Madonna*, c. 1310.
Tempera on wood panel, 325 x 204 cm.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

of superior beings had no share, was the common law in the great schools of all countries that had received Greek science. Perhaps even Babylon and Persia were not strangers to it. Jesus knew nothing of this advance. Though born at a time when the principle of positive science had already been proclaimed, he lived in the midst of the supernatural. Never perhaps had the Jews been more devoured by the thirst of the marvellous. Philo, who lived in a great intellectual centre, and who had received a very complete education, has only a false chimerical science, Jesus differed in this point in no wise from his countrymen. He believed in the devil whom he looked upon as a sort of genius of evil, and imagined that nervous diseases were the work of demons who took possession of the patient and tormented him. To him the marvellous was not the exceptional – it was the moral condition. The idea of the supernatural with its impossibilities, was not conceived until the day when the experimental science of nature was discovered. The man who is a stranger to all notion of physics, who believes that by a prayer he changes the course of the clouds, controls disease and even death itself, sees nothing extraordinary in miracle since the whole course of things is to him the result of the free volitions of divinity. This intellectual state was always that of Jesus. But in his great soul such a faith produced effects entirely different from those which it produced upon the multitude. With the majority, faith in the special action of God led to a silly credulity and to the deceptions of charlatans. To him it gave a deep idea of the familiar relations of man with God and an exaggerated faith in the power of man, admirable errors which were the principle of his power, because if they were one day to put him to the fault in the eyes of the physicist and the chemist, they gave him a power over his time which no individual ever wielded before or since.

Early in life his peculiar character revealed itself. Jesus, like all men exclusively absorbed in an idea, came to make small account of ties of blood. The bond of the idea is the only one which such natures recognize. “Behold my mother and my brethren,” he said stretching forth his hand towards his disciples; “whosoever shall do the will of my father, the same is my brother and my sister.” The simple people did not understand him and one day a woman, passing by him, exclaimed, it is said: “Blessed the womb that bare thee, and the paps that gave thee suck!” “Blessed rather,” he answered, “they that hear the word of God and keep it.” Soon, in his daring revolt against nature, he was to go still farther, and we shall see him trampling under his feet all that is human, kindred, love, country, devoting heart and soul only to the idea which appeared to him as the absolute form of the good and the true.

The First Aphorisms of Jesus. His Ideas on God the Father. His First Disciples.

Joseph died before the public life of his son began, Mary thus remained the head of the family, and this explains why her son, when it was desired to distinguish him from the many others of the same name, was usually called the “son of Mary.” It seems that, by the death of her husband, a stranger in Nazareth, she retired to Cana, where she may have been a native. Cana was a small town eight or ten miles from Nazareth at the foot of the mountains which are on the perimeter north of the plain of Asochis. The prospect, less grand than at Nazareth, extends over the whole plain and is closed most picturesquely by the mountains of Nazareth and the hills of Tzippori. Jesus appears to have made this place his residence for some time. There he probably passed a portion of his youth, and thence came his first splendours.

He worked at the trade of his father, which was that of a carpenter. This was no humiliating or unwelcome circumstance. The Jewish customs demanded that the man devoted himself to intellectual labours and should apprehend an acceptable occupation.

Virgin Psychosostria and the Annunciation, early 14th century.
Icon.
National Museum, Ohrid.


ΘΥ
ΣΩΤΡΙΑ





The Nativity, late 14th century.
Fresco.
Peribleptos Church, Mystras.



What was the progress of the mind of Jesus during this obscure period of his life? Through what meditations did he launch out into the prophetic career ? His history having come to us in the state of isolated stories and without exact chronology only allows us to make assumptions.

Jesus has no visions; God does not speak to him from without; God is in Him; he feels that he is with God, and he draws from his heart what he says of his Father. He lives in the bosom of God by uninterrupted communication; he does not see him, but he understands him without need of thunder and a burning bush like Moses, or a revealing tempest like Job, an oracle like the old Greek sages, of a familiar genius like Socrates, or of an angel Gabriel like Mohammed. The imagination and hallucination of St. Theresa, for example, are nothing in comparison. The intoxication of the Son proclaiming himself identical with God is also an entirely different thing. Jesus never for a moment enounces the sacrilegious idea that he is God. He believes that he is in direct communion with God; he believes himself the son of God. The highest consciousness of God which ever existed in the breast of humanity was that of Jesus.

It is clear, on the other hand, that Jesus, setting out with such proclivity of soul, will be in no way a speculative philosopher like Sakya-Mouni. Nothing is further from scholastic theology than the gospel. The speculations of the Greek fathers in regard to the divine essence come from an entirely different spirit. God conceived immediately as Father, this is the whole theology of Jesus. And that was not with him a theoretical principle, a doctrine more or less proven which he sought to inculcate. He used no argument with his disciples, he did not demand any of their attention. He did not preach his opinions, he preached himself. Oftentimes the greatest and most disinterested souls present, associated with a high degree of elevation, this peculiarity of perpetual attention to themselves and extreme personal susceptibility. Their persuasion that God is within them and is perpetually caring for them is so strong that they have no fear of imposing themselves upon others; with our reserve, our respect for the opinion of others, which is a portion of our weakness, they have nothing to do. This exalted personality is not egotism; for such men, possessed by their idea, gladly give their life to seal their work; it is the identification of the me with the object which it has embraced, carried to its last extent. It is pride to those who see in it only the personal fantasy of the founder; it is the finger of God to those who see the result. The fool here almost touches the inspired man; only the fool never succeeds.

Jesus undoubtedly did not at once reach this lofty affirmation of himself. But it is probable that from the very beginning he looked to God as a father. This is his great act of originality; in this he is in no way like his species. The God of Jesus is Our Father. "We hear him when we listen to a low whisper within us which says, "Father". He is the God of humanity. Jesus will not be a patriot like the Maccabees, or a theocrat like Juda the Gaulonite. Rising boldly above the prejudices of his nation, he will establish the universal fatherhood of God. The Gaulonite maintained that men should die rather than give to another than God the name of "master"; Jesus leaves this name to whoever chooses to take it, and reserves for God a gentler title. According to the mighty ones of the earth, to him the representatives of force, a respect full of irony, he founds the supreme consolation, the recourse to the Father which each one has in heaven, the true kingdom of God which each one bears in his heart.

This name of "kingdom of God" or "kingdom of heaven" was Jesus' favourite expression of revolution. Like nearly all the Messianic terms, it came from the Book of Daniel. According to the author of this extraordinary book, to the four profane empires, destined to be destroyed, will succeed a fifth empire which will be that of the saints and which will endure forever. This reign of God upon the earth naturally

Geertgen tot Sint Jans, *The Nativity at Night,* c. 1490.
Oil on oak panel, 34 x 25.3 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

received the most diverse interpretations. In Jewish theology, the "kingdom of God" is usually nothing but Judaism itself, the true religion, the monotheistic worship, piety. During the latter portion of his life, Jesus believed that this reign was to be realized materially by a speedy renewal of the world. But this undoubtedly was not his first thought. The admirable moral which he draws from the idea of this father God is not that of enthusiasts who believe the world near its end, and who are preparing by ascetics for a chemical catastrophe. It is that of a world which desires to live and which has lived. "The kingdom of God is within you," said he to those who subtly asked for external signs. The material conception of the divine advent was only a cloud, a passing error which death consigned to oblivion. The Jesus who founded the real kingdom of God, the kingdom of the meek and lowly, this is the Jesus of the earlier days, chaste days without alloy, when the voice of his Father resounded in his heart with a purer tone. There were then some months, perhaps a year, when God actually lived upon the earth. The voice of the young carpenter suddenly assumed extraordinary sweetness. Infinite charm radiated from his person, and the companions of his youth no longer recognized him. He still had no disciples, and the throng which pressed around him was neither a sect nor a school; but they felt already a common spirit, something gentle and penetrating. His lovely character, and doubtless one of those transporting countenances that, created around him a circle of fascination which hardly any, among this friendly and artless people, could resist.

Paradise had been, indeed, transported upon earth, had not the ideas of the young master too widely overstepped the level of common goodness, above which the human race has been incapable of being elevated. The brotherhood of men, sons of God, and the moral consequences which result from this, were deduced with an exquisite sentiment. Like all the rabbis of the time, Jesus had given little thought to consecutive reasoning, and instead, compressed his doctrine into aphorisms of a concise and expressive form, sometimes strange and enigmatical. Some of these maxims come from the books of the Old Testament. Others were the thoughts of more modern sages, especially of Antigonus of Soco, Jesus, the son of Sirach, and Hillel, which were known to him, not through learned studies, but as proverbs often repeated. The synagogues were rich in maxims very happily expressed and formed a sort of current proverb literature. Jesus adopted nearly all this oral instruction, infusing into it a higher meaning. Increasing ordinarily upon the duties declared by the Law and the elders, he demanded perfection. All the virtues of humility, of forgiveness, of charity, of abnegation, of severity to self, virtues that are rightly named Christian, if by that is meant that they were really preached by Christ, were in seeds of these first teachings. For justice, he contented himself with repeating the well known axiom, "Do not to others that which ye would not that they should do unto you." But this ancient wisdom, which was still somewhat selfish, was not enough for him. He went far beyond:

> *"Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also."*
> *"If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee."*
> *"Love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, pray for them that persecute you."*
> *"Judge not that ye be not judged. Forgive and ye shall be forgiven. Be merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful. It is more blessed to give than to receive."*
> *"Whosoever exalts himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."*

Rogier van der Weyden, *The Adoration of the Magi*, central panel, c. 1455.
Oil on oak panel, 138 x 153 cm.
Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

Concerning alms, pity, good works, gentleness, the desire of peace, complete disinterestedness of heart, he had little to add to the doctrines of the synagogue. But he gave to them an accent full of unction, which made new aphorisms uttered long before. Morality is not composed of principles more or less expressed.




OPVS GENTILIS DE FABRIANO
MCCCCXXIII MENSIS MAII



The poetry of the precept, which makes it lovely, is more than the precept itself, taken as an abstract truth. Now, it cannot be denied that the proverbs borrowed by Jesus from his predecessors, produced, in the gospel, an effect totally different from that in the ancient Law. It is not the ancient Law, it is not the Talmud, which has conquered and changed the world. Little original in itself, if by that is meant that it can be recomposed almost entirely with more ancient maxims, the evangelical morality remains none the less the highest creation which has emanated from the human conscience, the most beautiful code of perfect life that any moralist has traced.

He did not speak against the Mosaic law, but it is clear that he saw its insufficiency and allowed it to be understood. He constantly repeated that it was necessary to do more than the ancient sages had said. He prohibited the least harsh word, he forbade divorces and all oaths, he blamed retaliation, he condemned usury, and he declared voluptuous desire as criminal as adultery. He desired universal forgiveness of injuries. The motive with which he enforced these laws of higher charity was always the same: "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good. If ye love them only which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what is that? Do not the heathens the same? Be ye perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect."

A pure worship, a religion without priests and without external practices resting entirely upon the feelings of the heart, upon the imitation of God, upon the immediate communion of the conscience with the heavenly Father, were the result of these principles. Jesus never recoiled before that bold deduction which made of him, in the bosom of Judaism, a revolutionist of the highest stamp. Wherefore mediators between man and his Father? God seeing only the heart, of what use these

Gentile da Fabriano, *Adoration of the Magi,* 1423.
Tempera on wood panel, 303 x 282 cm.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Lorenzo Monaco, *Adoration of the Magi,* 1421-1422.
Tempera on panel, 115 x 170 cm.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.



purifications, these rites, which reach only the body? Tradition itself, a thing so holy to the Jew, is nothing compared with pure feeling. The hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who, in praying, turned their heads to see if anyone were looking, who gave their alms with ostentation, and put upon their dress signs which made them known as pious persons – all these affectations of false devotion were revolting to him. "They have their reward," said he; "but when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

He affected no external sign of asceticism, contenting himself with praying or rather meditating upon the mountains and in solitary places, where man has always sought God. This lofty idea of the communion of man with God, of which so few souls, even after him were to be capable was condensed into a prayer, which he thenceforth taught to his disciples:

> *"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us. Lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from the Evil One."*

Fra Filippo Lippi, *Madonna and Child with Angels*, c. 1455.
Tempera on wood, 95 x 62 cm.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

Sandro Botticelli, *Madonna of the Magnificat,* c. 1483.
Tempera on wood, diameter: 118 cm.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.





Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), *The Holy Family with a Shepherd*, c. 1510.
Oil on canvas, 99.1 x 139.1 cm.
The National Gallery, London.





He insisted particularly upon this idea that our heavenly Father knows better than us what we need, and that we almost insult him in asking for a definite thing.

Jesus, in this, did nothing more than to deduce the consequences of the great principles which Judaism had established, but which the official classes of the nation tended more and more to disown. The Greek and Roman prayer was almost always a mass of verbiage full of egotism. Never had pagan priests said to the faithful: "If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Alone in antiquity, the Jewish prophets, Isaiah especially, in their antipathy to the priesthood, had seen the true nature of the worship which man owes to God. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices? I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; incense is an abomination unto me; for your hands are full of blood. Make clean your thoughts; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, and come then." In the latter days, some teachers, like Simeon the Just, Jesus, son of Sirach, and Hillel, almost reached the goal, and declared that the sum of the Law was justice. Philo, in the Judaic-Egyptian world, attained at the same time with Jesus to ideas of a high moral holiness, the consequence of which was little regard for the rites of the Law. Sh'maya and Abtalion, more than once, showed that they also were very liberal casuists. Rabbi Johannan soon came to place works of mercy above even the study of the Law. Jesus alone, nevertheless, said it in an effective manner, ever was any man less a priest than Jesus, never more an enemy of the forms which stifle religion under the pretext of preserving it. By that, we are all his disciples and his continuators; by that he has laid an eternal rock, the cornerstone of true religion, and, if religion be the one thing needful to humanity, by that he has earned the divine rank which has been assigned to him. An idea absolutely new, the idea of a worship founded upon purity of heart and human fraternity, made through him its entrance into the world, an idea so elevated that the Christian church was upon this point completely to betray his intentions, and that, in our days, but few souls are capable of comprehending it.

An exquisite perception of nature furnished him at all times with expressive images. Sometimes a remarkable penetration, what we call genius, set off his aphorisms; at others, their vivid form was due to the happy employment of popular proverbs, "Or how can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye."

These lessons for a long time locked away in the heart of the young master, had gathered already a few converts. The spirit of the day was towards small churches. They wrote very little. The Jewish teachers of that day did not make books; everything passed in conversation and in public lessons, to which they sought to give a character easy of retention. On the day when the young carpenter of Nazareth began to produce in public these teachings, for the most part already known, but which, thanks to him, were to regenerate the world, it was not yet an event. It was one rabbi the more, and around him a few young men eager to hear him and seeking the unknown. Time is required to compel the attention of men. Jesus will add to it nothing more than durability. In one sense, he will compromise it; for every idea in order to succeed, needs to make sacrifices; none comes immaculate out of the struggle of life.

To conceive the truth, indeed, is not enough. It is necessary to give it success among men. For that, ways less pure are necessary. Indeed, were the gospel confined to a few chapters of Matthew and Luke,

Pieter Bruegel the Elder,
The Adoration of the Kings, 1564.
Oil on oak, 111.1 x 83.2 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

it would be more perfect, and would not give rise to so many objections, but without miracles would it have converted the world? Had Jesus died at the period which we have reached in his career, there would have been in his life no page which wounds us, but, grander in the eyes of God. He would have remained unknown to men; he would be lost in the multitude of great unknown souls, but most of all; the truth would not have been promulgated, and the world had not profited by the immense moral superiority which his Father had imparted to him. In morality, as in art, words are nothing, deeds are everything. The idea which is concealed beneath a picture of Raphael is a small thing; it is the picture alone that counts. Likewise, in morality, truth becomes of value only if it pass to the condition of feeling, and it attains all its preciousness only when it is realized in the world as a fact.

Development of the Ideas of Jesus Concerning the Kingdom of God

Up until the arrest of the prophet John the Baptist, which we place proximately in the summer of the year 29, Jesus did not leave the vicinity of the Dead Sea and the Jordan. A voyage in the desert of Judea was generally considered the preparation for great deeds, a sort of "retreat" before public acts. Jesus followed in this the example of others, and passed forty days, with no company but the wild beasts, keeping a rigorous fast. The imagination of his disciples was much exercised concerning this retreat. The desert was, in the popular belief, the abode of demons. There are few regions in the world more desolate, more God-forsaken, more closed against life than the stony slope which forms the western border of the Dead Sea. It was believed that during the time which he passed in this country, he suffered terrible temptations, that Satan had endeavoured to terrify him with his illusions or cajole him with seductive promises, and that then the angels had come to serve him as a reward for his victory.

It was probably when coming from the desert that Jesus was told of the arrest of John the Baptist. Perhaps he feared that he might be comprehended in the severities exercised in regard to John, and preferred not to expose himself at a time when, in view of the small celebrity which he had obtained, his death would not serve the progress of his ideas. He returned to Galilee, matured by an important experience and having developed contact with a great man, very different from himself, the feeling of his originality. On the whole, the influence of John had been more injurious than useful to Jesus. It was a check in his development. Everything goes to show that when he descended to the Jordan his ideas were superior to those of John, and that it was by a species of concession that he inclined for a moment towards baptism. Perhaps if the Baptist, from whose authority he could with difficulty have withdrawn himself, had been left in freedom, he would not have been able to throw off the yoke of rites and of external practices. In that case he would undoubtedly have remained an unknown Jewish sectary; for the world would not have abandoned one set of rites for another. Through the attraction of a religion disengaged from all external forms it is that Christianity has enchanted souls. The Baptist once imprisoned, his school was greatly diminished, and Jesus was restored to his own work. The only thing which he owed to John, was, to a certain extent, lessons in preaching and in popular agitation. From this time, in fact, he preached with much more force and impressed himself upon the multitude with authority.

It seems also that his sojourn with John, less by the action of the Baptist than by the natural progress of his own thought, greatly matured his ideas upon "the kingdom of heaven." His watchword thenceforth is "good tidings," the announcement that the kingdom of God is at hand. Jesus will no longer be a delightful moralist aspiring to concentrate sublime lessons in a few brief and living

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Madonna and Child with St. Anne (Madonna dei Palafrenieri),* 1605.
Oil on canvas, 292 x 211 cm.
Museo e Galleria Borghese, Rome.







Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn,
Christ among the Scribes, c. 1655.
Oil on canvas, 97.5 x 129 cm.
Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg.



statements; he is the transcendent revolutionist who trys to renew the world from its deepest foundations, and to establish upon earth the ideal which he has conceived. “To await the kingdom of God,” will be synonymous with being a disciple of Jesus. The words “kingdom of God” or “kingdom of heaven,” as we have already said, had long been familiar to the Jews, but Jesus gave them a moral sense, a social bearing, which even the author of the Book of Daniel, in his apocalyptic enthusiasm, hardly dared to glance.

The coming of this reign of good will be a grand and sudden revolution. The world seemed overturned; the present state of things being bad, in order to represent the future it sufficed to imagine nearly the contrary of every thing in existence. The first shall be last.” A new order shall govern humanity. Now good and evil are mixed like tares and good grain in the field. The master permits them to grow together; but the hour of violent separation will come. The kingdom of God will be like a great cast of the net, which gathers good and bad fish; the good are placed in vessels, and the rest are cast away. The germ of this grand revolution will be at first unrecognizable. It will be like a grain of mustard seed, which is the least of seeds, but which, cast into the earth, becomes a tree in the branches of which the birds come and lodge, or again it will be like the leaven which, put into the dough, ferments the entire

Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *The Passover in the Holy Family* (detail), 1856.
Watercolour on paper, 40,6 x 43,2 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.



mass. A series of parables, often obscure, was designed to express the surprises of this sudden advent, its apparent injustice, its inevitable and definitive character.

Who will establish this reign of God? Let us remember that the first idea of Jesus, an idea so deep in him that it probably had no origin, but inhered in the very roots of his being, was that he was the son of God, the intimate of his Father, the executor of his will. The response of Jesus to such a question could not therefore be doubtful. The conviction that he was to bring about the reign of God took absolute possession of his soul. He looked upon himself as the universal reformer. The heavens, the earth, all nature, madness, disease and death are only instruments to him. In his paroxysm of heroic will, he believes himself all powerful. If the earth does not yield to this supreme transformation, the earth will be ground to powder, purified by fire and the breath of God. A new heaven will be created, and the whole world will be peopled by the angels of God.

A radical revolution, embracing even nature itself, was the fundamental idea of Jesus. Thenceforth, doubtless, he renounced politics; the example of Juda the Gaulonite had shown him the uselessness of popular seditions. He never dreamed of revolt against the Romans or the tetrarchs. The unbridled

Max Liebermann, *The Twelve-Year-Old Jesus in the Temple,* 1879.
Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg.



Joseph Stella, *The Crèche,*
c. 1929-1933.
Tempura on paper on canvas.
Collection of the Newark Museum,
Newark.





and anarchical principle of the Gaulonite was not his. His submission to the established powers, derisive in reality, was complete in appearance. He paid tribute to Caesar in order not to cause scandal. Liberty and right are not of this world; wherefore trouble his life with idle susceptibilities? Despising the earth, convinced that the present world does not merit his care, he took refuge in his ideal kingdom; he founded this grand doctrine of transcendent disdain, the true doctrine of the liberty of souls, which alone gives peace. But he had not yet said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” Gloomy thoughts were also mingled with his most just views. At times strange temptations crossed His spirit. In the desert of Judea, Satan had offered him the kingdoms of the earth. Not knowing the power of the Roman Empire, he might, upon the deep basis of enthusiasm which existed in Judea and which resulted soon after in such terrible military resistance, have hoped to found a kingdom by the boldness and the number of his partisans. Many times perhaps this supreme question was presented to him. Shall the kingdom of God be realized by force or by gentleness, by revolt or by patience?

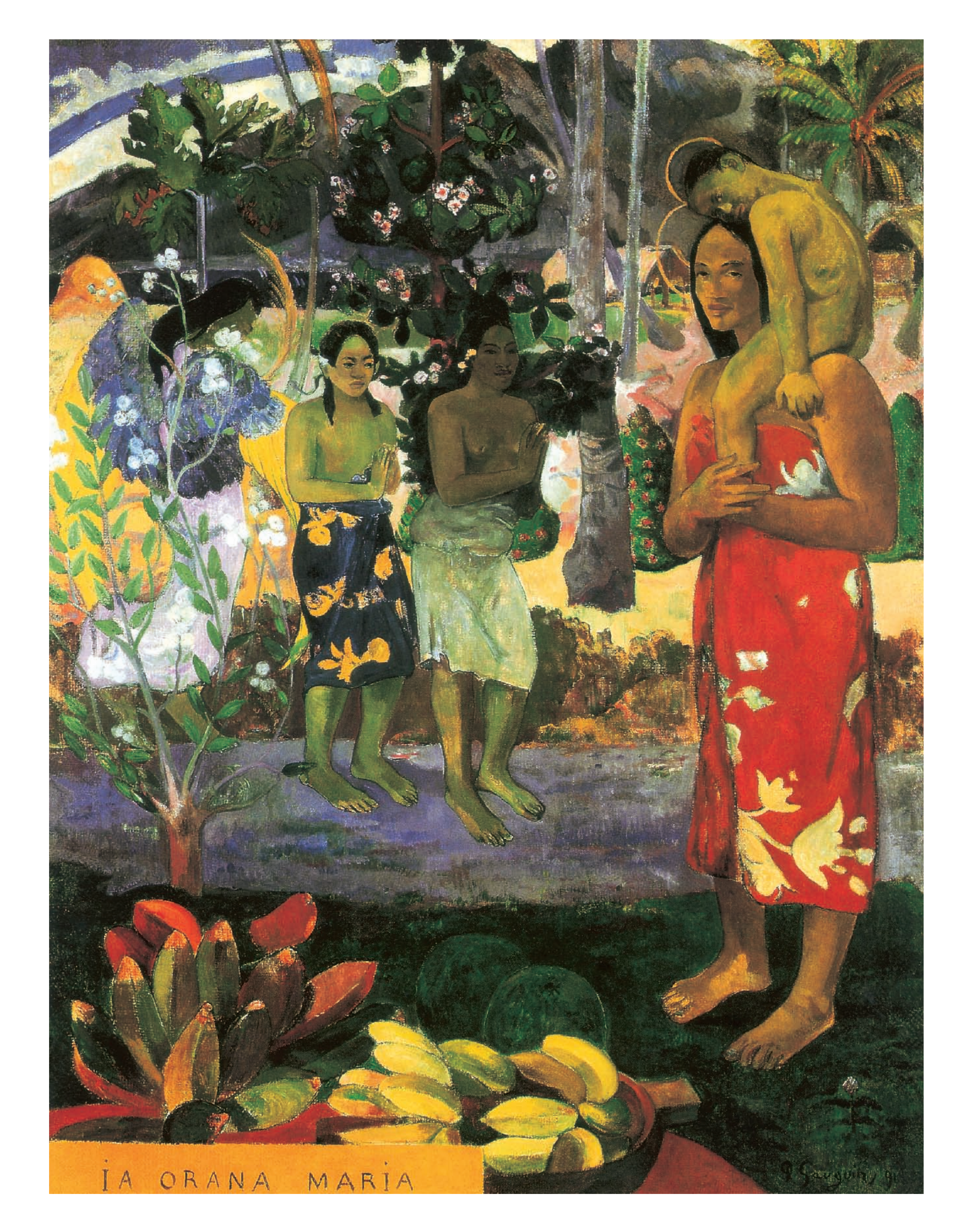
The revolution which he desired to bring about was always a moral revolution, but he was not yet ready to rely for its execution upon the angels and the final trump. It was upon men and by men themselves that he desired to act. A visionary who had no other idea than the proximity of the last judgment would not have had this care for the amelioration of man, and would never have founded the most beautiful moral teaching that humanity has received. Much uncertainty remained doubtless in his thought, and a noble sentiment, rather than a fixed design, urged him to the sublime work which has been realized by him, although in a manner far different from that which he imagined.

It is indeed the kingdom of God, or rather the kingdom of the spirit, which he founded, and if Jesus, from the bosom of His father sees his work fructifying in history, he can well say with truth: “Lo! that which I desired.” What Jesus has established will remain eternally his, aside from the imperfections which mingle with everything realized by humanity, is the doctrine of the liberty of souls. Already Greece had presented upon this subject fine ideas. Many stoics had found means of being free under a tyrant. But, in general, the ancient world had imagined liberty as connected with certain political forms; the liberals were called Harmodius and Aristogiton, Brutus and Cassius. The true Christian is far more free from every chain; he is here below an exile that to him is the temporary master of this earth which is not his home? Liberty for him is truth. Jesus did not know enough of history to comprehend how exactly such a doctrine filled the need of the time just when republican liberty was ending, and the small municipal constitutions of antiquity were expiring in the unity of the Roman empire. But his admirable good sense and the truly prophetic instinct which he had of his mission, guided him here with marvellous safety. By this expression: “Render to Caesar the things that are Cesar’s and to God the things are God’s,” he has created something beyond politics, a refuge for souls in the midst of the empire of brutal force. Assuredly such a doctrine had its dangers. To establish in principle that the sign by which to recognize the legitimate power is to look at a coin, to proclaim that the perfect man pays his tax disdainfully and without discussion, was to destroy the republic in its ancient form and to favour all tyrannies. Christianity, in this sense, has largely contributed to weaken the sentiment of duty among citizens and to deliver the world over to the absolute power of accomplished facts. But in constituting an immense free association which, for three hundred years, had nothing to do with politics, Christianity amply compensated for the injury which it inflicted upon the civic virtues. The power of the state was limited to the things of earth, the soul was enfranchised, or at least the terrible fasces of Roman omnipotence were broken forever.

Marc Chagall, *Madonna of the Village*, 1938-1942.
Oil on canvas, 102.5 x 98 cm.
Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

Paul Gauguin, *La Orana Maria*, 1891.
Oil on canvas, 113.7 x 87.6 cm.
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. (p. 82)

Paul Gauguin, *Bé Bé, or The Nativity*, 1896.
Oil on canvas, 67 x 76.5 cm.
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. (p. 83)

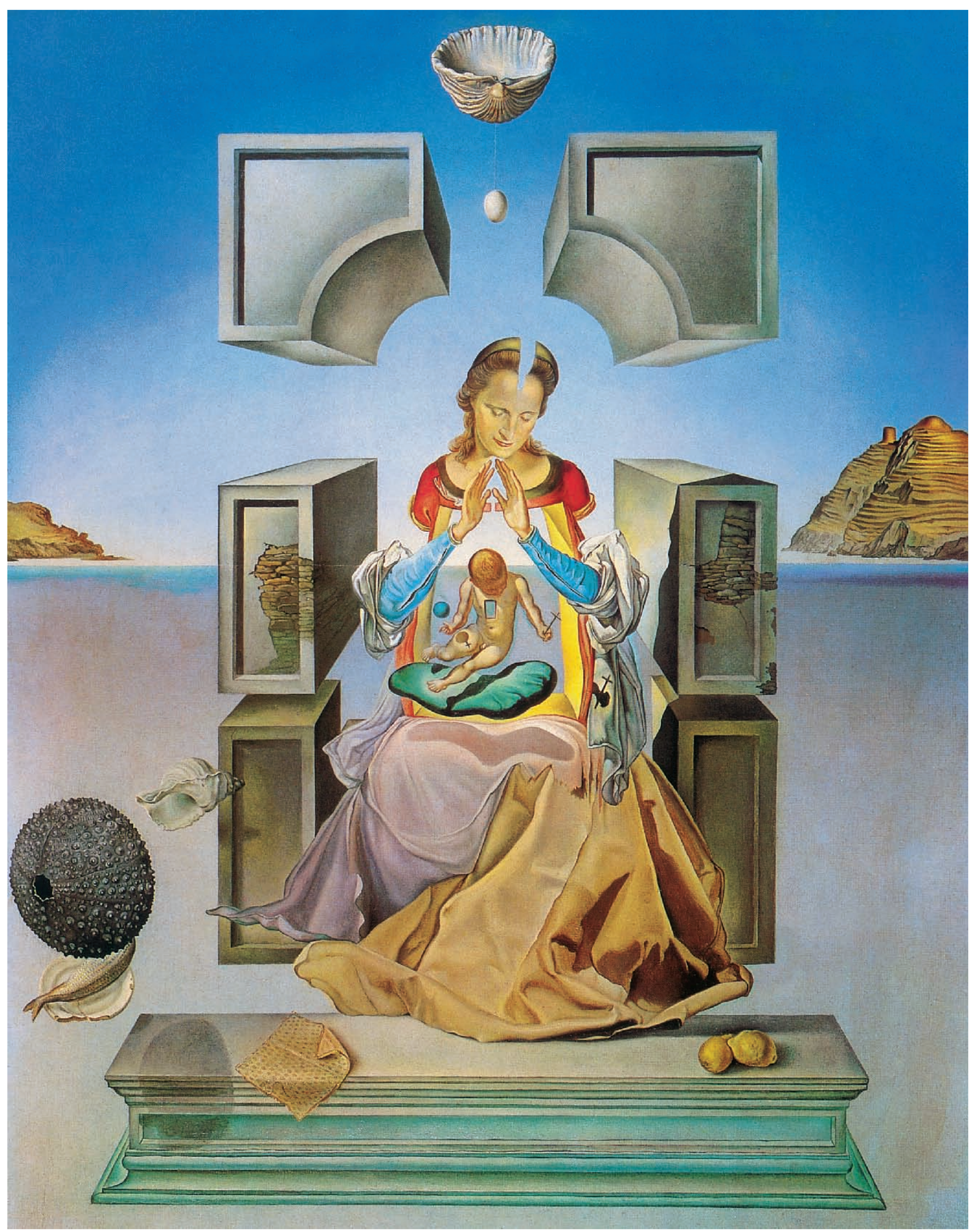

IA ORANA MARIA
P. Gauguin 91



Our principles of positive science are offended by the fancies which are included in the programme of Jesus. We know the history of the earth, the cosmic revolutions of the kind which Jesus expected, are produced only by geological or astronomical causes, the connection of which with moral powers has never been established. But, to be just towards great creators, we must not pause at the prejudices which they may have shared. Columbus discovered America in consequence of very erroneous ideas; Newton thought his crazy exposition of the Apocalypse as certain as his system of the world. Do we rank any average man of our time above a Francis of Assisi, a Saint Bernard, a Joan of Arc, or a Luther, because he is free from the errors which they believed? Would we measure men by the correctness of their ideas in Physics, and their more or less exact knowledge of the true system of the world? Let us comprehend better the position of Jesus and the nature of his power. The deism of the 18th century and a certain kind of Protestantism have accustomed us to consider the founder of the Christian faith only as a great moralist, a benefactor of humanity. We no longer see in the Gospel anything more than good maxims; we cast a prudent veil over the strange intellectual condition into which he was born. There are people who regret also that the French Revolution was in many things a departure from principles, and that it had not been conducted by wise and moderate men. Let us not impose our petty programmes of common-sense respectability upon these extraordinary movements so far above our pitch. Let us continue to admire the "morality of the Gospel;" let us suppress in our religious instructions the chimera which was its soul; but let us not believe that with simple ideas of happiness or of individual morality the world can be moved. The idea of Jesus was far more profound; it was the most revolutionary idea which was ever evolved from a human brain; it must be taken in its completeness, and not with those timid suppressions which rob it precisely of that which has rendered it efficacious for the regeneration of humanity.

That there was a contradiction between the belief in the speedy destruction of the world and the habitual moral philosophy of Jesus, conceived in view of a stable condition of humanity, broadly analogous to that which now exists, none will attempt to deny. It was just this contradiction which assured the success of his work. The millenarian alone would have possessed no power. The millenarianism gave the impulsion, the morality secured the future. In this way, Christianity united the two conditions of great success in this world, a revolutionary starting-point, and the possibility of life. Everything which is made to succeed, must respond to these two needs; for the world demands at the same time to change and to endure. Jesus, while he announced an unparalleled revolution in human affairs, proclaimed the principles upon which society has rested for the last two thousand years. That which indeed distinguishes Jesus from the agitators of his time and from those of all ages, is his perfect idealism. Jesus, in some respects, is an anarchist, for he has no idea of civil government. This government seems to him purely and simply an abuse. He speaks of it in vague terms, and like a man of the people who had no idea of polity. Every magistrate appears to him the natural enemy of the men of God; he announces to his disciples contests with the authorities, without dreaming for a moment that they might give cause for shame. But never does the temptation to substitute himself for the powerful and the rich appear in him. He desired to annihilate riches and power, but not to seize them. He predicts to his disciples persecutions and punishments, but he did not once permit himself to entertain the thought of armed resistance. The idea of omnipotence through suffering and resignation, of triumphing over force by purity of heart, is indeed an idea peculiar to Jesus. Jesus was not a spiritualist, for everything to him resulted in a palpable realization; he was not the least notion of a soul separate from the body. But he is a perfect idealist, the material to him being only the sign of the idea, and the real, the living expression of that which does not appear.

Salvador Dalí, *The Madonna of Port Lligat,* 1948.
Oil on canvas, 49.53 x 38.1 cm.
Haggerty Museum, Marquette University, Milwaukee.





Christ the Teacher

Jesus at Capernaum

Possessed by an idea more and more imperious and exclusive, Jesus will henceforth advance with a kind of impassable fatality along the path which his astonishing genius and the extraordinary circumstances in which he lived had marked out for him. Thus far he had communicated his thoughts only to a few persons attracted to him privately; henceforth his teachings became public and popular. He was scarcely thirty years of age. The little group of listeners who had accompanied him to John the Baptist had doubtless increased, and perhaps some of John's disciples had joined him. It is with this first nucleus of a church that he boldly announces, on his return into Galilee, the "good tidings of the kingdom of God." That kingdom was at hand, and he, Jesus, was a "son of man" whom the prophet Daniel had perceived in his vision as the divine executor of the final and supreme revelation.

We must remember that, in the ideas of the Jews, antipathetic to art and mythology, the simple form of man was superior to that of the cherubs and the fantastic animals, which the imagination of the people, since it had been subjected to the influence of Assyria, supposed to be ranged around the divine Majesty. Already in Ezekiel, the being seated upon the supreme throne, far above the monsters of the mysterious chariot, the great revelatory of the prophetic visions has the likeness of a man. In the Book of Daniel, in the midst of the vision of empires represented by animals, just as the sitting of the great judgment commences and the books are opened, a being "like the son of man" advances towards the Ancient of Days, who confers on him the power to judge the world, and to govern it forever. Son of man is in the Semitic languages simply a synonym of man. But this great passage of Daniel struck the imagination; the word son of man became, at least in certain schools, one of the titles of the Messiah portrayed as the judge of the world and as king of the new era which was about to open. The application which Jesus made of it to himself was therefore the proclamation of his Messiah ship and the declaration of the speedy catastrophe in which he was to appear as judge, clothed with the full powers which had been delegated to him by the Ancient of Days.

The success of the preaching of the new prophet was now decided. A group of men and women, all characterized by a common spirit of youthful candour and artless innocence, adhered to him and said: "Thou art the Messiah." As the Messiah must be the son of David, they naturally gave him that title which was a synonym of the first. Jesus permitted it to be given him with pleasure, although it caused him some embarrassment, his birth being well known. For his own part, the title which he preferred was that of "Son of man," a title apparently humble, but one which attached itself directly to the expectations of a Messiah. It is by this expression that he designates himself, so much so that coming from his mouth "the son of man" was synonymous with the pronoun "I" which he avoided using. But he is never thus addressed, doubtless because the name in question could be fully accorded to him only at the period of his second coming. The centre of activity of Jesus, at this epoch of his life, was the little city of Capernaum, situated upon the border of the Lake of Gennesareth. The name of Capernaum into the composition of which enters the word "village," seems to designate a small straggling town of the ancient style, in opposition to the great cities built according to the Eoman fashion, like Tiberias. This name was so little known, that Josephus in one passage of his writings took it for the name of a fountain, the fountain being more celebrated than the village which was situated near it. Like Nazareth, Capernaum had no history, and had in no way participated in the unhallowed progress favoured by Herod. Jesus attached himself very closely to this town

Christ and St. John, c. 1330.
Polychrome and gilded walnut,
141 x 73 x 48 cm.
Altes Museum, Berlin.



William Holman Hunt, *The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple,* 1854-1855. Oil on canvas, 85.7 x 141 cm. Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham.



John Everett Millais, *Christ in the House of His Parents ('The Carpenter's Shop')*, 1849-1850.
Oil on canvas, 86.4 x 139.7 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.

and made it a second home. Soon after his return, he had made an effort at Nazareth which was unsuccessful. He could there do no mighty work, according to the naive remark of one of his biographers. The acquaintance of the Nazarenes with his family, which was of little note, was too injurious to his authority. They could not regard as the son of David one whose brother, sister and brother-in-law they saw every day. It is remarkable, moreover, that his family made strenuous opposition to him, and flatly refused to believe in his mission. The citizens, far more violent, desired, it is said, to kill him by casting him headlong from a steep cliff. Jesus aptly remarked that this experience was the common lot of all great men, and applied to himself the proverb: “No man is a prophet in his own country.”

This failure was far from discouraging to him. He returned to Capernaum, where he organized a series of visits to the little villages around. The people of that beautiful and fertile country were scarcely ever united except on Saturday. He chose this day for his teachings. Each village had then its synagogue or place of meeting. This was a rectangular hall, rather small, with a portico, decorated with the Grecian orders. The Jews having no distinctive architecture, had never attempted to give to their edifices an original style. The ruins of many ancient synagogues still exist in Galilee. They are all constructed of large and good materials; but their style is very mean on account of that profusion of vegetable ornaments, of foliage and of twists which characterises Jewish monuments. In the interior, there were benches, a chair for the public reading, a closet to keep the sacred scrolls. These edifices, which had nothing in common with the temple, were the centre of all the Jewish life. The people assembled there on the Sabbath day for prayer and the reading of the Law and the Prophets. As Judaism, out of Jerusalem, had no clergy proper, any person arose, read the lessons of the day (parasha and haftarah) and added to this a midrash or commentary, entirely personal, in which he set forth his peculiar ideas. This was the origin of the “homily,” of which we find the complete model in the small treatises of Philo. Anyone had the right to make objections and to question the reader; so the congregation soon degenerated into a sort of free assembly. It had a president, “elders,” a hazzan-appointed reader or beadle, secretaries or messengers who carried on the correspondence between one synagogue and another, and a sacristan. The synagogues were thus in fact little independent republics; they had an extended jurisdiction. Like all municipal corporations up to an advanced period of the Ionian Empire, they made honorary decrees, adopted resolutions having the force of law over the community, pronounced sentence for penal offences, the executor of which was ordinarily the hazzan.

Such an institution, notwithstanding the arbitrary severities which it permitted, could not fail to occasion very animated discussions. They were like so many separate little worlds, in which a national spirit was preserved, and which offered a prepared field to internal battles. There was expended an enormous amount of passion. Disputes of precedence were intense among them. To have a seat of honour in the first row was a reward of a piety, or the privilege of the rich which was most envied. On the other hand, the liberty, accorded to whomsoever chose to take it, of constituting himself the reader and commentator of the sacred text, gave wonderful facilities for the propagation of new ideas. This was one of the great opportunities of Jesus and the means which he employed most habitually to establish his doctrinal teaching. He entered the synagogue, and rose to read. The hazzan handed him the book, he unrolled it, and reading from the siddur, he learned from that lesson some development similar to his ideas. As there were few Pharisees in Galilee, the discussion against him did not assume that degree of intensity and that acrimonious tone which, in Jerusalem, would have stopped him. The good Galileans had never heard discourse so adapted to their cheerful imaginations. They admired him, they caressed him, they believed that he spoke well and that his reasons were convincing. The most difficult objections he resolved with authority; the charm of his speech and of his person captivated these people still young and not withered by the pedantry of the doctors.

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn,
Jesus Deliberating with the Doctors,
1650-1655.
Drawing pen with brown ink,
brown wash and white corrections,
18.7 x 25.8 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.





Albrecht Dürer, *Christ Among the Doctors,* 1506.
Oil on wood, 64.3 x 80.3 cm.
Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid.

The authority of the young master thus went on increasing day by day, and, naturally, the more others believed in him the more he believed in himself. His sphere of action was quite limited. It was entirely confined to the basin of Lake Tiberias, and even in this basin it had a favourite region. The lake is twenty or twenty-five kilometres long, by twelve or sixteen kilometres broad; although presenting the appearance of a regular oval, it forms from Tiberius to the entrance of the Jordan, a kind of bay, the curve of which measures about twelve metres. Here was the field in which the seed which Jesus sowed found at length the earth well prepared.

Upon leaving Tiberias, we find at first rocky cliffs and a mountain which seems crumbling into the sea. Then the mountains trend away; a plain (El-Ghoueir) opens almost at the level of the lake. This is a delightful grove with lots of greenery, furrowed by abundant waters, which come in part from a large round basin of antique construction (Ain-Medawara). At the entrance of this plain, which is the country of Gennesaret proper, is found the miserable village of El Medjdel. At the other end of the plain (still following the sea) the site of a village is encountered (Khan-Minjeh) very fine fountains (Ain-etTin), a good road, straight and deep, cut in the rock, which Jesus certainly often trod, and which is the passage between the plain of Gennesaret and the northern slope of the lake. A kilometre and a half further, we cross a little saltwater river (Ain-Tahiga) flowing out of the earth by several large springs a few steps from the lake, which it enters in the midst of a thicket of trees. Finally, three



kilometres beyond, upon the arid slope which extends from Ain-Tabiga to the mouth of the Jordan, a few huts and a cluster of rather massive ruins are found, called Tell-Hum,

Five small cities, of which men will speak forever, as much as of Rome or Athens, were, in the time of Jesus, scattered over the space which extends from the village of Medjdel to Tell-Hum. Of these five villages, Magdala, Dalmanutha, Capernaum, Bethsaida, and Chorazin, the first only can now be identified with certainty. The city of Magdala preserves the name and the place of the little market town which gave to Jesus his most faithful friend. Dalmanutha was probably near by. As for Bethsaida, it is entirely by speculation that they are said to be located at Tell-Hum, at Ain-et-Tiii, at Khan-Minyeh, and at Ain-Medawara. It would seem that in topography, as in history, there has been a profound design to conceal the traces of the great founder. It is doubtful whether we shall ever succeed, amid this complete devastation, in identifying the places to which humanity would fain come to kiss the imprints of his feet.

The lake, the horizon, the shrubs, the flowers, these are all that remain of the little region of eight or ten miles in which Jesus founded his divine work. The trees have totally disappeared. In this country, where the vegetation was so brilliant that Josephus saw in it a sort of miracle — nature, according to him, being pleased to collect there, side by side, the plants of the cold latitudes, the productions of the

Maurice Denis, *Nazareth,* 1905.
Oil on canvas, 114 x 162 cm.
Collection of Modern Religious Art,
Vatican Museums, Vatican City.



torrid zones, and the trees of the temperate climes, burdened all the year with flowers and fruit. In this country, the traveller now calculates a day in advance the spot in which he may find on the morrow a little shade for his repast. The lake has become deserted. A single bark, in the most miserable condition, prows today these waves once so rich in life and joy. But the waters are still light and transparent! The beach, composed of rocks or of pebbles, is almost that of a little sea. It is clean, neat, without mud, always beaten at the same level by the slight movement of the waves. Little promontories, covered with oleanders, tamarind trees, and the prickly caper, complete the outline. At two places especially, at the edge of the Jordan, near Tarichoea and at the border of the plain of Gennesaret, there are intoxicating parterres, where the waves die away amid clumps of grass and flowers. The brook of Ain-Tabiga forms a little estuary fall of pretty shellfish. Clouds of swimming birds cover the lake. The horizon is sparkling with light. The water, of a celestial azure, deeply encased between frowning rocks, seems, when viewed from the summit of the mountains of Safed, to be in the bottom of a cup of gold. To the north, the snowy ravines of Hermon stand out in white lines against the sky; on the east, the high undulating plains of the Gaulonitis and of Persea, completely arid, and clothed by the sun in a species of velvety atmosphere, form a continuous mountain-range, or rather a long, elevated terrace, which, from Caesarea Philippi trends indefinitely towards the south.

The heat upon the borders is now very oppressive. The lake occupies a depression of almost two hundred metres below the level of the Mediterranean, and thus shares the torrid conditions of the Dead Sea. An abundant vegetation formerly tempered these excessive heats. It is difficult to comprehend that the lake is more and more seemingly like an oven, and used to be the scene of such extraordinary activity. Josephus, moreover, considers the country very temperate. There has been, no doubt, as in the Koman campagna, some climate change, brought about by historical causes. The beautiful land of Gennesaret did not suspect that beneath the brow of this peaceful wayfarer, her destinies were swaying. A dangerous compatriot, Jesus was fatal to the country which had the perilous honour of producing him. Become to all an object of love or of hate, envied by two rival fanaticisms, Galilee, as the price of its glory, was to be changed into a desert. But who would say that Jesus had been happier had he lived to the full age of man, obscure in his native village? And who would think of these ingrate Nazarenes, if, at the risk of compromising the future of their little town, one of them had not recognized his Father, and proclaimed himself son of God.

Four or five large villages, situated three or four kilometres apart was the little world of Jesus, at the period at which we have now arrived. It does not appear that he was ever at Tiberius, a profane town, occupied, in large part, by pagans and being the habitual residence of Antipas. Sometimes, however, he left his favourite region. He went in a boat to the eastern shore, to Gergesa for example. Towards the north, we behold him at Paneas, Caesarea Philippi, at the foot of Hermon. Once, indeed, he made a journey towards Tyre and Sidon, a country which must then have been marvellously flourishing. In all these regions he was in the full sweep of paganism. At Caesarea, he saw the celebrated grotto of the Panium in which the source of the Jordan was placed, and which the popular belief surrounded with strange legends. He could behold the marble temple which Herod had built near this in honour of Augustus. He probably stopped before the many votive statues to Pan, to the Nymplis, to the Echo of the grotto, which piety had already accumulated in this beautiful place. Paganism, which, in Phoenicia, had reared on every hill a temple and a sacred grove, all this appearance of great industry and of worldly riches. He returned again to his well-loved shore of Gennesaret. The centre of his thoughts was there; there he found faith and love.

The Baptism of Christ, c. 520.
Mosaic.
Baptistery of Arians, Ravenna.



The Disciples of Jesus

In this terrestrial paradise, which the great revolutions had thus far but little affected, dwelt a population in perfect harmony with the country itself – active, honest, living a life of cheerfulness and affection. The Lake of Tiberius is one of the most plentifully supplied with fish. Very successful fisheries were established, especially at Bethsaida and Capernaum, which had produced a certain standard of living. The families of the fishermen formed a pleasant and peaceful society, stretching by numerous bonds of relationship through all the lake region which we have described. Their leisurely life gave large freedoms to their imagination. Ideas in relation to the kingdom of God found, in these little companies of simple people, more credence here than anywhere else in civilization, Jesus there found his real family. He installed himself among them as one of themselves; Capernaum became his own city, and in the midst of the little circle which adored him, he forgot his sceptical brothers, ungrateful Nazareth and its mocking incredulity. One house especially, at Capernaum, offered him a pleasant asylum and devoted disciples. It was that of two brothers, both sons of a certain Jonas, who was probably dead at the period when Jesus came to reside upon the shore of the lake. These two brothers were Simon, surnamed Peter, and Andrew. Born at Bethsaida, they were established at Capernaum when Jesus commenced his public life. Peter was married, and had children; his mother-in-law lived with him. Jesus loved this house, and made it his home. Andrew appears to have been

The Baptism of Christ, 11th century.
Mosaic.
Nea Moni of Chios, Chios.

Fra Angelico, *The Baptism of Christ,* c. 1441.
Fresco, 179 x 148 cm.
Convento di San Marco, Florence.




ECCE AGNIVS

a disciple of John the Baptist, and Jesus had perhaps known him on the banks of the Jordan. The two brothers continued still even at the time when it seems that they must have been most occupied with their master, to exercise the calling of fishermen. Jesus, who was fond of playing upon words, said, occasionally, that he would make them fishers of men. In fact, among all his disciples, he had no more faithful adherents.

Another family, that of Zabdia or Zebedee, a fisherman in comfortable circumstances, and owner of several boats offered Jesus an ardent welcome. Zebedee bad two sons, James, who was the elder, and a younger son, John, who at a later period was called to play so important a part in the history of early Christianity. Both were zealous disciples. Salome, Zebedee's wife, was also strongly attached to Jesus, and accompanied him until his death.

Women, indeed, welcomed him with ardour. He had with them those reserved manners which render possible a very sweet union of ideas between the sexes. The separation of men and women, which has prevented among Semitic nations, all delicate development, was doubtless, then as in our day, much less rigorous in the country and in villages, than in the great towns. Three or four devoted Galilean women always accompanied the young master, and disputed among themselves the pleasure of listening to him and caring for him in turn. They brought to the new sect an element of enthusiasm and of the marvellous, the importance of which was already perceived. One of these, Mary of Magdalene, who has rendered the name of her poor little village so famous in the world, appears to have been a very exalted person. According to the language of the time, she had been possessed of seven devils; that is to say, she had been affected by nervous diseases apparently inexplicable. Jesus, by his pure and gentle beauty, calmed this troubled organization. The Magdalene was faithful to him even to Golgotha, and on the second day after his death, takes the most prominent part; for she was the principal witness by which faith in the resurrection was established, as we shall see hereafter. Joanna, wife of Chuza, one of Antipater's stewards, Susannah, and others who remained unknown, followed him constantly, and ministered unto him." Some were rich, and, by means of their fortune, placed the young prophet in a position to live without working at the trade which he had hitherto followed.

Many more followed him habitually, and recognized him as their master: a certain Philip of Bethsaida, Nathaniel, son of Tolmai or Ptolemy of Cana, perhaps one of the twelve. Matthew, probably the same who was the Xenophon of nascent Christianity. He had been a publican, and as such he was doubtless more eloquent than the rest. Perhaps he thought even then of writing these Logia, which are the basis of all that we know of the teachings of Jesus. There are also named among the disciples Thomas, or Didymus, who doubted sometimes, but who appears to have been a man of heart and of generous attractions; a Lebbeus, or Thaddeus; a Simon the Zealot, perhaps a disciple of Juda the Graulonite, belonging to this party of the Kenaim – then existing, and which was soon to play so great a part in the movements of the Jewish people. Finally, Judas, son of Simon, of the town of Kerioth, who was the exception in the faithful band, and drew upon himself such appalling renown. He was the only one who was not a Galilean; Kerioth was a town at the extreme south of the tribe of Judah, half a day's journey beyond Hebron.

We have seen that his family was, in general, little attracted to him. Yet James and Jude, his cousins by Mary Cleophas, were henceforth numbered among his disciples and Mary Cleophas herself was one of the company which followed him to Calvary. At this time, we do not see his mother near him. It is only after the death of Jesus that Mary acquires great consideration, and that the disciples seek to attach her to themselves. Then also the members of the family of the founder, under the title of "brothers of the Lord," form an

Leonardo da Vinci and Andrea del Verrocchio, *The Baptism of Christ,* 1470-1476.
Oil tempera on wood panel,
177 x 151 cm.
Galleria degli Uffizi, Florence.

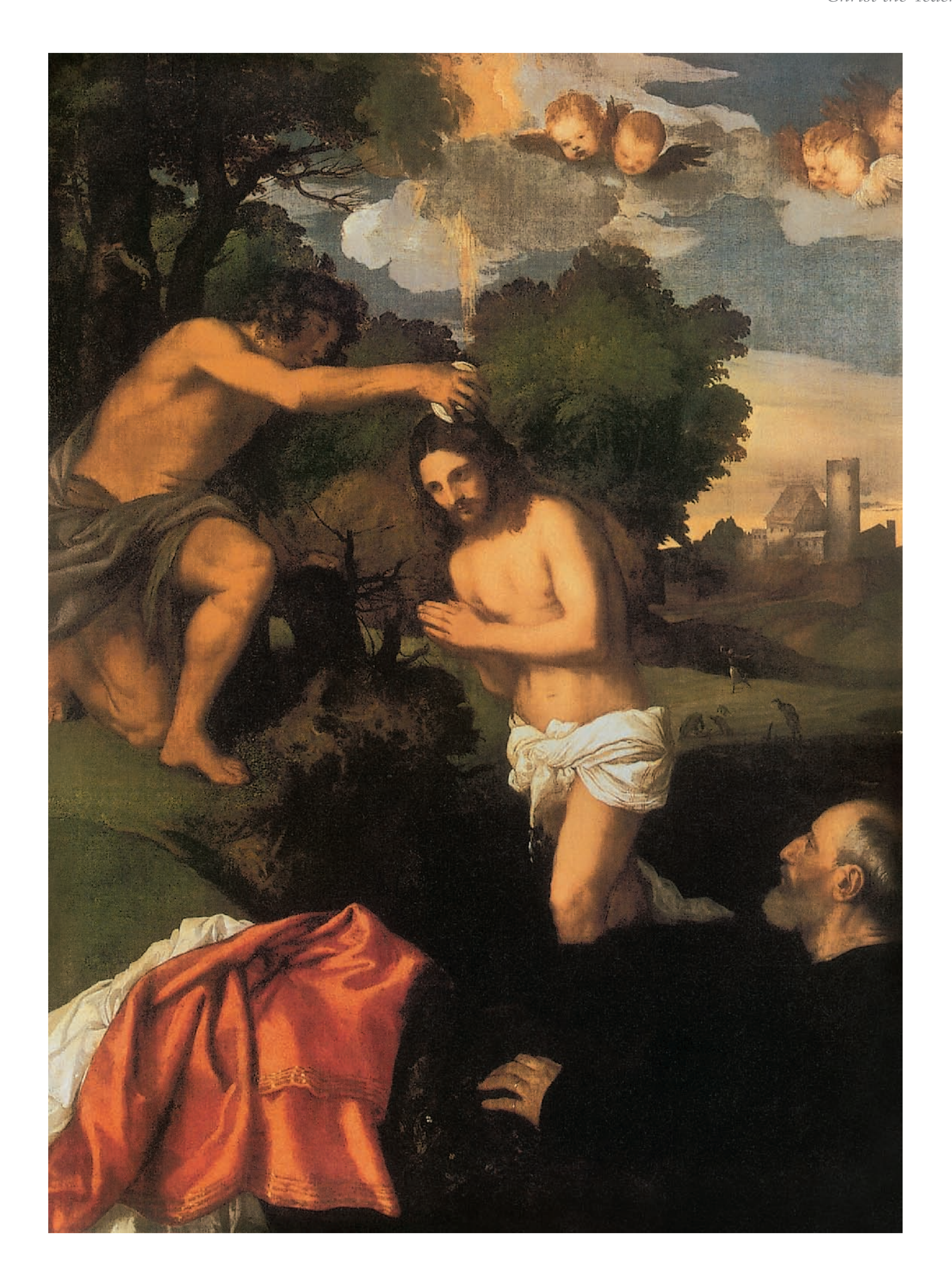
influential group, which was long at the head of the church of Jerusalem! After the sack of the city, took refuge in Batanea. The mere fact of having been related to him became a positive advantage.

In this friendly company, Jesus evidently had preferences, and, to some extent, a more select circle. The two sons of Zebedee, James and John, appear to have occupied the first rank in this. They were so full of passion that Jesus had aptly surnamed them "Sons of Thunder, because of their excessive zeal, which, if it had wielded the thunderbolt, they would have made too frequent use of it." John, especially, appears to have enjoyed a certain familiarity with Jesus. Perhaps this disciple, who afterwards was to write out his remembrances in a manner in which his personal interest is too apparent, exaggerated the affection which his master bore him. It is still more significant that in the synoptic gospels, Simon Barjona or Peter, James, son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, form a sort of private circle, which Jesus calls to him at certain moments when he distrusts the faith or the intelligence of the rest. It seems, moreover, that they were all three associated in their fisheries. The affection of Jesus for Peter was deep. Peter's character, straight-forward, sincere, and impetuous, pleased Jesus, who sometimes indulged in a smile at his earnestness. Peter, little given to mysticism, communicated to the master his simple doubts, his dislikes, and his very human weaknesses, with a frank honesty which reminds us of that of St. Louis. Jesus chided him in a friendly way, full of confidence and esteem. As to John, his youth, his exquisite tenderness of heart, and his vivid imagination, must have had great charm. The personality of this extraordinary man, who gave such a decided deflection to nascent Christianity, was not developed until later. In old age, he wrote concerning his master, this strange gospel which contains such precious teachings, but in which, to our conception, the character of Jesus is falsified in many points. John's nature was too powerful and too deep to be able to stoop to the impersonal tone of the first evangelists. He was the biographer of Jesus as Plato was of Socrates. Habituated to revolve his memories with the feverish restlessness of an exalted soul, he transformed his master while endeavouring to delineate him, and at times leads us to suspect (unless other hands have changed his work) that perfect good faith was not always his rule and his law in the composition of that singular production.

No hierarchy, properly so-called, existed in the rising sect. All were to call each other "brethren," and Jesus absolutely proscribed titles of superiority, such as "master," "father," himself alone being master, and God alone being father. The greatest should be the servant of the others. Yet Simon Bar Jonah is distinguished among his equals by a quite peculiar degree of importance. Jesus lived with him and taught in his boat. His house was the centre of the preaching of the gospels. He was generally considered the head of the flock, and it is to him that the tax collectors apply for the sums due from the community. Simon was the first who had recognized Jesus as the Messiah. In a moment of unpopularity, Jesus asked his disciples: "Will ye also go away?" Simon answered: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." At one time, he seems to promise him "the keys of the kingdom of heaven" and gives him the right to pronounce upon earth decisions which shall always be ratified in heaven.

Undoubtedly, this pre-eminence of Peter excited some jealousy. This jealousy was kindled especially in view of the future, in view of this kingdom of God, where all the disciples would be seated upon thrones, on the right and on the left of the master, to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. They questioned who should then be nearest to the son of man, acting in some sort as his prime minister and his assistant judge. The two sons of Zebedee aspired to this rank. Filled with this idea, they put forward their mother, Salome, who one day took Jesus aside, and asked of him the two places of honour for her sons. Jesus averted the request by his habitual principle, that who so exalts himself shall be abused, and that the

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), *The Baptism of Christ,* c. 1513-1514.
Oil on wood, 115 x 89 cm.
Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome.





kingdom of heaven shall belong to the little ones. This caused some outcry in the community; there was great discontent against James and John. The same rivalry seems to appear in the gospel of John, in which we behold the writer incessantly declaring that he was the "beloved disciple" to whom the master at death confided his mother, and systematically seeking to place himself near Simon Peter, at times to put himself before him, in important junctures where the older evangelists had omitted him.

Among the persons mentioned above, all began as fishermen. At all events none of them belonged to an elevated social class. Matthew or Levi, son of Alphens, had been publicans. But those to whom that name was given in Judea were not the former generals or men of an elevated rank (always Roman knights) who were called patrician at Rome. They were the agents of those farmer-generals, employees of a low grade, and simple land-waiters. The great road from Acre to Damascus, one of the most ancient roads in the world, which crossed Galilee passing by the lake, greatly multiplied there this type of worker. Capernaum, which was perhaps upon the route, possessed a numerous amount of them. The tax, new to them, was the sign of their vassalage; one school, that of Juda the Gaulonite, held that to pay it was an act of paganism. Thus the tax-collectors were abhorred by the zealots of the Law. They were named only in company with assassins, highway robbers, and men of infamy. Jews who accepted such functions were excommunicated and became forbidden from making a will; their money-chests were accursed and the casuists prohibited the faithful from changing money with them. These poor men, outcasts from society, looked to each other. Jesus accepted a dinner during which Levi and offered him, according to the language of the times, "many publicans and sinners." This caused great scandal. In these ill- famed houses, one ran the risk of meeting disreputable society. We shall often see him thus, careless of shocking the prejudices of right-thinking people, seeking to elevate the classes humiliated by the orthodox, and exposing himself in this manner to the most vehement reproaches of devotees.

Jesus owed these numerous conquests to the infinite charm of his person and his speech. A penetrating remark, a look falling upon a simple conscience, which needed only to be awakened, made for him an ardent disciple. Sometimes Jesus made use of an innocent artifice, which Joan of Arc also employed. He would aver that he knew something intimately concerning him to that person whom he wished to win, or he would recall to him some circumstance dear to his heart. It is thus that he touched Nathaniel, Peter, and the Samaritan woman. Dissembling the true cause of his power, I mean his superiority over those around him, he suffered them to believe, in order to satisfy the ideas of the times, ideas which were moreover entirely his own, that a revelation from on high discovered to him their secrets and opened their hearts. All thought that he lived in a sphere superior to that of humanity.

It was said that he conversed with Moses and Elias on the mountains and it was believed that, in his moments of solitude, angels came to pay their homage to him, and established a supernatural discourse between him and heaven.

The Sermons by the Sea

Such was the group which, upon the banks of the Lake of Tiberius, pressed around Jesus. The aristocracy was represented by a tax-gatherer and by the wife of a steward. The rest consisted of fishermen and simple people. Their ignorance was extreme and they believed in spectres and in spirits. The beautiful climate of Galilee made the existence of these honest people a perpetual enchantment. They truly foresaw the

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn, *Jesus Healing the Sick (The Hundred Guilder Print)*, first state, c. 1649. Etching, dry point and engraving, 28.1 x 39.4 cm. Private collection.

kingdom of God – simple, good, happy, rocked gently upon their delightful little sea, or sleeping at night upon its shores. We cannot conceive the intoxication of a life which thus glides away in the presence of the heavens, the glow, mild yet strong, which this perpetual contact with nature gives, the dreams of these nights passed amid the brilliancy of the stars, beneath the azure dome of the illimitable depths. It was during such a night that Jacob, his head pillowed upon a stone, saw in the stars the promise of an innumerable posterity, and the mysterious ladder by which Elohim came and went from heaven to earth. In the time of Jesus, the heavens were not yet closed, nor had the earth grown cold. The cloud still opened over the son of man and angels ascended and descended upon his head. Visions of the kingdom of God were everywhere, because man carried them in his heart. The clear, mild eye of these simple souls contemplated the universe in its ideal source; perhaps the world disclosed its secret to the divinely lucid conscience of these fortunate children, whose purity of heart made them worthy one day to see God.

Jesus always lived with his disciples outdoors. Often he went into a boat and taught his listeners who sat upon the shore. Sometimes, he sat down upon the hills which border the lake, where the air is so pure and the horizon so luminous. His faithful flock also went, cheerful wayfarers, receiving the inspirations of the master in their first flower. An innocent doubt sometimes arose, a gently sceptical question; Jesus, with a smile or a look, silenced the objection. At every step, in the passing cloud, the growing grain, the yellowing ear, they saw the sign of the kingdom at hand; they believed that they were soon to see God, and be the masters of the world; their tears turned into joy, it was the advent upon earth of the universal consolation.

> *"Blessed, said the master, are the poor in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
> *"Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.*
> *"Blessed are the meek; for they shall inherit the earth.*
> *"Blessed are they who hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.*
> *"Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.*
> *"Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God.*
> *"Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.*
> *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

His preaching was sweet and gentle, full of nature and of the perfume of the fields. He loved flowers, and he took from them his most charming lessons. The birds of heaven, the sea, the mountains, the play of children, were used by turns in his teachings. His style had nothing of the Greek period, but approached much nearer to that of the Hebrew parabolas, and especially to the sayings of the Jewish doctors, his contemporaries, such as we find them in the Pirkei Avot. It is true that we find in the Buddhist books parables of exactly the same tone and the same composition as the Gospel parables. But it is difficult to admit that a Buddhist influence could have been felt in these. The spirit of meekness and the depth of feeling which equally animated Buddhism and nascent Christianity, suffice perhaps to explain these analogies.

A total indifference to external modes of life and to the vain appurtenances of "comfort," which in this severe climate were a necessity, was the consequence of the simple and pleasant life which was led in Galilee. Cold climates, by obliging man to struggle perpetually against external nature, cause too much value to be attached to the pursuit of comfort and luxury. On the contrary, the countries which awakens fewest wants are the lands of idealism and poetry. The accessories of life are insignificantly compared with the pleasure of living. The embellishment of the house is superfluous and men remain indoors as little as possible. The hearty and regular alimentation of less generous climates would be

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn,
Head of Christ, c. 1655.
Oil on oak panel, 25 x 21.7 cm.
Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen
zu Berlin, Berlin.





considered burdensome and disagreeable. And as for luxury of dress, how can they live with what God has given to the earth and to the birds of the sky? Daily labour, in such climates appears superfluous; what it yields is not worth that which it costs. The beasts of the fields are clad better than the richest man, and they do nothing. This contempt, which, when it has not sloth for its cause, contributes greatly to the elevation of the soul, inspired in Jesus' charming apologues: "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; And yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or what shall we drink? Or, wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek,) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first righteousness and the kingdom of God, and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow; for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

This sentiment, essentially Galilean, had a decisive influence upon the destiny of the nascent sect. The first rule of the happy flock, relying upon their heavenly Father to satisfy their wants, was to regard the cares of life as evils which stifle in man the germ of all good. Every day they asked God for the morrow's bread Wherefore lay up treasure? The kingdom of God is at hand. "Sell that ye have and give alms," said the master. "Provide for yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not." What is more senseless than heaping stores for heirs whom you shall never see? As an example of human folly, Jesus was fond of citing the case of a man who, after having enlarged his barns and laid up goods for many years, died before he had enjoyed them. Brigandage, which was very common in Galilee, gave much force to this view of things. The poor, who did not suffer by it, came to regard themselves as the favoured of God; while the rich, having no sure possession, were the truly disinherited. In our society, established upon a very rigorous idea of property, the position of the poor man is horrible; he has literally no place under the sun. There are no flowers, no grass, no shade, but for him who possesses the earth. In the East these are the gifts of God, which belong to no man. The proprietor has but a slender privilege; nature is the patrimony of all.

Dawning Christianity, moreover, in this did but follow the track of the Esssenes or Therapeutes, and the Jewish sects founded upon life in communities. A communistic element entered into all of these sects, despised equally by the Pharisees and the Sadducees. By a temperate contemplative existence, leaving individual liberty in full play, these little churches thought to inaugurate upon earth the kingdom of heaven. Utopias of blissful life, founded upon the fraternity of man and the pure worship of the true God, preoccupied lofty souls, and produced on all sides essays bold and sincere, but of small results.

William Holman Hunt, *The Shadow of Death,* 1870-1873.
Oil on canvas, 281 x 248 cm.
Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.

Jesus, whose relations with the Essenes was very difficult to determine with precision (resemblance, in history, not always implying intercommunication), was in this respect certainly their brother. Community of goods was for some time the rule in the new society. Avarice was the capital sin, now it must be understood that the sin of "avarice," against which Christian rule was so severe, was then simple property. The first condition necessary for a disciple of Jesus, was to realize his fortune and to give the proceeds to the poor. Those who recoiled before this extremity did not enter the community. Jesus often repeated that he who found the kingdom of God must purchase it at the price of all his goods, and that in so doing he yet made an advantageous bargain. "The man who hath found a treasure in a field," said he, "without losing an instant go and sell that he hath and buy that field. The merchantman who hath found one pearl of great price sell all, and buy it." Alas! the inconveniences of this regime soon began to manifest. A treasurer was necessary, Judas Iscariot was chosen for that office. Rightfully or wrongfully, he was accused of stealing the common fund, so much is certain, that he made a bad end.

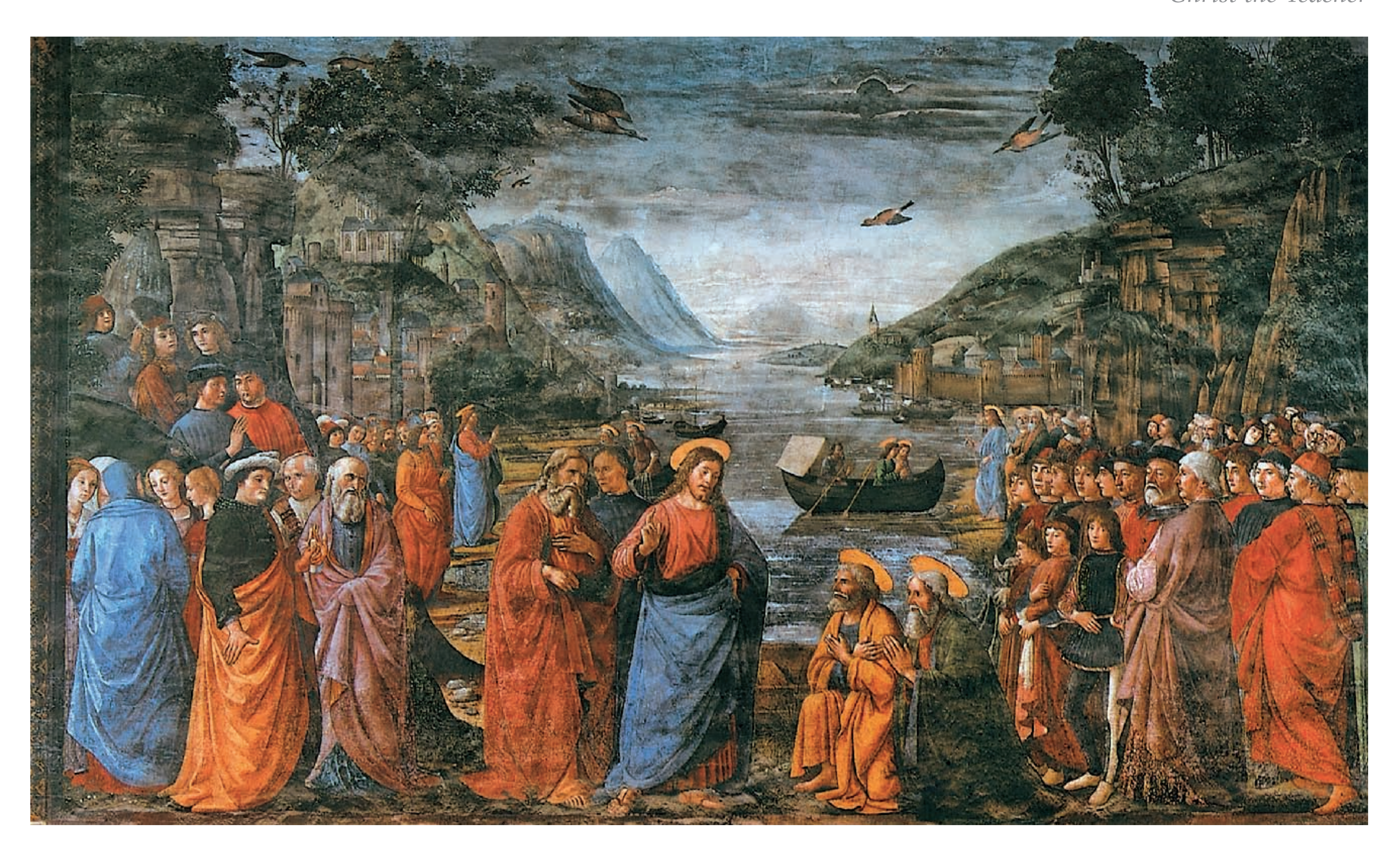
Sometimes the master, more versed in the things of heaven than in those of earth, taught a political economy still more singular. In a strange parable, a steward is praised for having made friends among the poor at the expense of his master, that the poor in their turn might receive him in the kingdom of heaven. The poor, indeed, as they are to be the dispensers of this kingdom, will receive only those who have given to them. A prudent man, looking to the future, should therefore seek to win them. "The Pharisees, who were covetous," says the Evangelist, "heard these things and they derided him." Heard they also this terrible parable? "There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried away by the angels into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and was buried, and in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried, and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue: for I am tormented in this flame. But Abraham said, "Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime received thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted and thou art tormented." What more just? Afterwards this was called the parable of the "wicked rich man." But it is purely and simply the parable of the "rich man." He is in hell because he is rich, because he does not give his goods to the poor, because he dines well, while others at his gate fare poorly. Finally at a time when, with less exaggeration, Jesus presents the obligation of selling one's goods and giving them to the poor, only as a condition of perfection, he still makes this terrible declaration: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God."

A feeling of wonderful depth controlled Jesus in all this, as well as the band of joyous children who accompanied him, and made him for all eternity the true creator of the soul's peace and the great comforter of life. In releasing man from what he calls "the cares of this world," Jesus went to excess and attacked the essential conditions of human society; but he founded this lofty spirituality which during centuries has filled souls with joy in this vale of tears. He saw with perfect clearness that the heedlessness of man, his want of philosophy and morality, come generally from the distractions into which he allows himself to be drawn, from the cares which beset him and which civilization multiplies beyond measure. The Gospel has thus been the supreme remedy for the sorrows of common life, a mighty distraction from the wretched cares of earth, a sweet appeal like that of Jesus to the ear of Martha: "Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things; but one thing is needful." Thanks to Jesus, the most spiritless existence, that most absorbed in sad or humiliating duties, has had its glimpse of heaven.

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn, *Christ in the Storm on the Sea of Galilee,* 1633.
Oil on canvas, 161.7 x 129.8 cm.
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston. Stolen and missing since 1990.







The Kingdom of God Conceived as the Advent of the Poor.

These maxims, good for a country in which the conditions of life are free sunshine and the open air, this delicate communism of a flock of God's children, living in confidence upon the bosom of their father, were very well for a simple sect, persuaded continually that its utopia was at the point of realization. But it is evident that they could not rally the mass of society. Jesus, indeed, soon comprehended that the official world of his time would give no countenance to his kingdom. He resolved upon his course with extreme boldness. Leaving all this world to its hardness of heart and its narrow prejudices, he turned towards the simple. A vast substitution of race is to take place. The kingdom of God is: first, for children and for those who are like them; second, for the outcasts of this world, victims of social arrogance, which repulses the good but humble man; third, for heretics and schematics, publicans, Samaritans and pagans of Tyre and Sidon. An energetic parable illustrated this appeal to the people and justified it.

A king has made a wedding feast and sends forth his servants to call them that were bidden. All excuse themselves; some mistreat the servants. The king then takes a decided stand. The proper persons would not come at his invitation; very well! It shall be the people found in the streets and lanes, the poor, the blind and the halt, anybody; the house must be filled, and I swear to you, said the king, that none of those which were bidden shall taste of my supper."

Pure Ebionism, that is to say the doctrine that the poor (ebionim) only shall be saved, that the reign of the poor is at hand, was therefore the doctrine of Jesus; "Woe unto you that are rich!" said he, "for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger! Woe unto you that laugh,

El Greco (Domenikos Theotokópoulos), *Christ the Redeemer*, 1608-1614.
Oil on canvas, 101 x 81 cm.
Casa Museo del Greco, Toledo.

Domenico Ghirlandaio, *The Calling of the First Apostles*, 1481.
Fresco, 349 x 570 cm.
Sistine Chapel, Vatican Palace, Vatican City.

for ye shall mourn and weep." "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, said he again, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." It is perhaps in an analogous sense that he often repeated: "Be ye good bankers," that is to say: "Make good investments for the kingdom of God, by giving your goods to the poor, according to the ancient proverb: He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth to the Lord."

This was not, moreover, a new thing. The most exalted democratic movement of which humanity has preserved the remembrance (the only one also which has been successful, for it alone has confined itself to the realm of pure idea), had long been agitating the Jewish people. The thought that God is the avenger of the poor and feeble against the rich and powerful, is found on every page of the Old Testament. The history of Israel is of all histories that in which the popular spirit has most constantly ruled. The prophets, true tribunes of the people, and in one sense the boldest of tribunes, had thundered without ceasing against the great and established a strict relation, on the one hand, between the words "rich, impious, violent and wicked," and, on the other, between the words, "poor, gentle, humble and pious." Under the Seleucids, nearly all the aristocrats having apostatized and passed over to Hellenism, these associations of ideas grew all the stronger. The Book of Enoch contains maledictions still more forcible than those of the Gospel against the world, the rich and the powerful, luxury it presents as a crime. The "son of man" in this strange Apocalypse, dethrones kings, snatches them away from their voluptuous life and hurls them headlong into hell. The initiation of Judea into mundane life, the recent introduction of an element of luxury and ease altogether worldly, provoked a furious reaction in favour of patriarchal simplicity. Woe to you who despise the dwelling and the inheritance of your father. Woe to you who build your palaces with the sweat of others! Each one of the stones, each one of the bricks thereof is a sin." The name of "poor" (ebion) had become synonymous with "saint" and "friend of God." It was the name which the Galilean disciples of Jesus loved to give themselves; it was long the name of the Christians of the Batanea and of Haouran (Nazarenes, Hebrews) who remained faithful to the language as well as to the ancient teachings of Jesus, and who boasted of possessing among them the descendants of his family. At the close of the second century, these good sectaries who had dwelt without the great current which bore away the other churches, are classed as heretics (Ebionites), and in order to explain their name a pretended heresiarch was invented.

We readily discover, indeed, that this exaggerated taste for poverty could not be very durable. It was one of those utopian elements which always existed in great foundations, and which time tempers to just proportions. Transported into the broad medium of human society, Christianity was one day very readily to consent to take the rich to its bosom, just as Buddhism, exclusively monastic in its origin, when conversions began to multiply, soon came to admit lay members. But everything preserves the mark of its origins. Although quickly laid aside and forgotten, Ebionism left in all the whole history of Christian institutions a leaven that was not lost. The collection of the Logia or discourses of Jesus was made in the Ebionite medium of the Batanea. "Poverty" remained an ideal which the true lineage of Jesus never abandoned. To possess nothing was the true evangelical condition; mendacity became a virtue, a sacred state. The great Umbrian movement of the thirteenth century, which is, among all attempts at religious foundation, that which most resembles the Galilean movement, was made entirely in the name of poverty. Francis of Assisi, that man of all the world who, by his exquisite goodness and his sympathy, delicate, refined, and tender, with universal life, has most resembled Jesus, was poor.

Duccio di Buoninsegna,
The Temptation of Christ on the Mountain, 1308-1311.
Tempera on poplar panel, 43.2 x 46 cm.
The Frick Collection, New York.





Ivan Nikolayevich Kramskoy,
Christ in the Wilderness, 1872.
Oil on canvas, 180 x 210 cm.
Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.



The mendicant orders, the innumerable communist sects of the middle ages (Pauvres de Lyon, Begards, Bons-Hommes, Fratricelli, Humiliati, Gospel Poor, etc.), grouped under the banner of the "Eternal Gospel," professed to be, and were in fact, the true disciples of Jesus. But here again the most impossible dreams of the new religion were fruitful. The pious mendacity, of which our industrial and administrative societies are so impatient, was, in its day and beneath the sky which comported with it, full of charm. It offered to a multitude of contemplative and gentle souls the only condition which befitted them. To have made poverty an object of love and desire, to have lifted the beggar upon the altar and sanctified the dress of the man of the people, is a masterstroke at which political economy may not be deeply touched, but before which the true moralist cannot remain indifferent. Humanity, to bear its burden, has need to believe that it is not fully paid by its wages. The greatest service which can be rendered it is to repeat to it often that it does not live by bread alone.

Like all great men, Jesus had sympathy with the people, and felt himself at home with them. The Gospel was made, in his idea, for the poor; it is to them that he brings the good news of salvation. All the outcasts of orthodox Judaism were his favourites. Love of the people, pity for their weakness, the sentiment of the democratic chief, who feels living in him the spirit of the multitude, and recognizes himself as its natural interpreter, constantly bursts forth in his acts and his discourses.

The chosen band presented, indeed, of a very motley character, at which the orthodox must have been greatly astonished. It numbered in its bosom people with whom a Jew of self-respect would not associate. Perhaps Jesus found in this unconventional society more distinction and more heart than in a pedantic, formal respectability, proud of its seeming morality. The Pharisees, exaggerating the Mosaic rules, came to think themselves polluted by contact with people less rigid than they. They reached in their meals almost the puerile distinctions of caste in India. Despising these miserable aberrations of religious sentiment, Jesus loved to dine with those who were its victims. They saw beside him persons

William Dyce, *The Man of Sorrows*, 1860.
Oil on millboard, 34.3 x 49.5 cm.
National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh.



who were said to lead an evil life, perhaps, it is true, for this cause only, that they did not share in the follies of the pretended devotees. The Pharisees and doctors cried out at the scandal "Behold," said they, "with what manner of men he eats." Jesus made, then, keen responses, which exasperated the hypocrites, "The whole need not a physician" or again: "The shepherd who hath lost one sheep out of an hundred, leaves the ninety and nine to go after that which is lost, and, when he hath found it, he brings it home upon his shoulders rejoicing" or again "The son of man is come to save that which was lost" or again: "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners," finally, that delightful parable of the prodigal son, in which he who has fallen is presented as having a sort of privilege of love over the one who has always been righteous. Women, weak or guilty, surprised by so much charm, and tasting for the first time the alluring contact of virtue, freely approached him. They were astonished that he did not repulse them. "Oh," said the puritans, "this man is no prophet, for if he were, he would perceive that the woman who is touching him is a sinner." Jesus answered by the parable of a creditor who forgave his debtors unequal debts, and he feared not to prefer the lot of him to whom the largest debt was forgiven. He measured souls only by their love. Women with hearts full of tears and disposed by their faults to feelings of humility, were nearer his kingdom than commonplace natures, in whom it is often little merit not to have fallen. It is easy to conceive, on the other hand, that these tender souls, finding in their conversion to the sect, a ready means of reinstatement, became passionately attached to him.

Far from seeking to check the murmurs which his contempt for the social susceptibilities of the times aroused, he seemed to take pleasure in exciting them. Never did anyone avow more haughtily that disdain of the "world," which is the condition of great achievements and of great originality. He pardoned the rich man only when, by reason of some prejudice, the rich man was hated by society."

Francisco Pacheco, *Christ Attended to by Angels,* 1616.
Oil on canvas, 286 x 418 cm.
Musée Goya, Castres.



He loftily preferred people of equivocal life and of little consideration to the orthodox magnates. “The publicans and the harlots,” said he to them, “go into the kingdom of God before you. John came; the publicans and the harlots believed him; and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.” We can understand how cutting must have been the reproach of not having followed the example of women of pleasure, to people making a profession of gravity and rigid morality.

He had no external affectation nor show of austerity. He did not shun pleasure; he went gladly to marriage festivals. One of his miracles was performed to enliven a village wedding. These marriage parties in the East are held in the evening. Each one carries a lamp; the lights dancing to and fro produce a very pleasing effect. Jesus loved this gay and animated spectacle, and drew from it some of his parables. When such conduct was compared to that of John the Baptist, it seemed scandalous. One day, when the disciples of John and the Pharisees were observing a fast: “Why,” he was asked, “do the disciples of John and the Pharisees fast and pray, but thine eat and drink?” “Suffer them,” said Jesus; “can ye make the groomsmen fast, while the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them; then shall they fast.”* His gentle gaiety was constantly expressing itself by lively reflections and kindly pleasantries. “Whereunto,” said he, “shall I liken this generation?and to what are they like? They are like unto children sitting in the marketplace, and calling one to another, and saying:

We leave piped unto you,
And ye have not danced
We have mourned unto you,
And ye have not wept.

Diego Velázquez, *Kitchen Scene with Christ in the House of Martha and Mary,* c. 1618.
Oil on canvas, 60 x 103.5 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

John came, neither eating nor drinking; and ye say: "He is a mad man. The son of man is come eating and drinking"; and ye say: "Behold a gluttonous man and a wine bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners." But wisdom is justified of all her works.

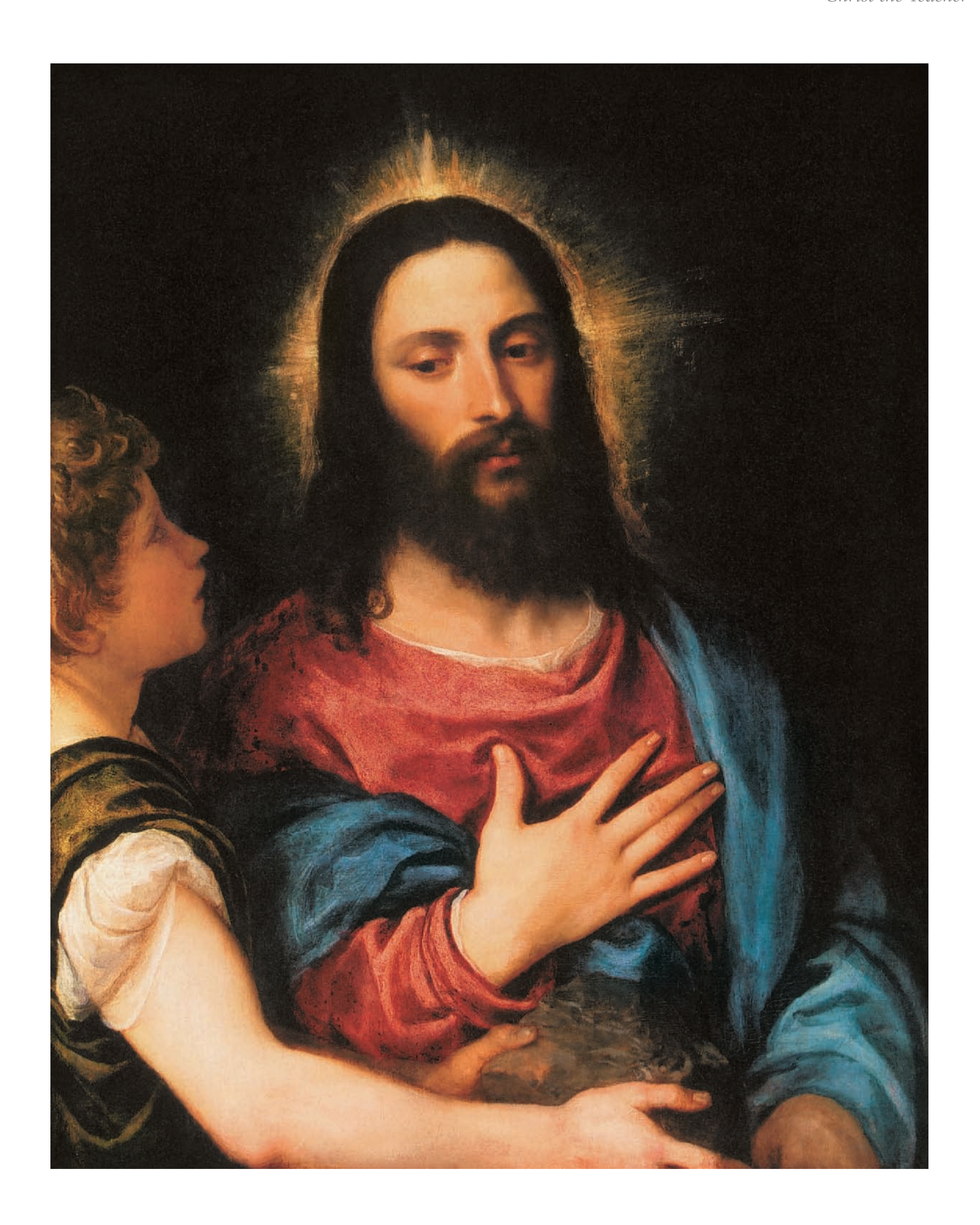
Thus he crossed Galilee in the midst of a perpetual holiday. He rode upon a mule, an animal in the East so sure and good, whose large black eyes, shaded with long lashes, are full of gentleness. His disciples sometimes displayed a rustic pomp about him at the expense of their garments, which took the place of carpets. They put these upon the mule which bore him, or spread them upon the ground in his path. When he alighted at a house, it was a rejoicing and a benediction. He stopped in the market-towns and at the great farmhouses, where he received an assiduous hospitality. In the East, the house at which a stranger stops becomes at once a public place. The whole village assembles there; the children invade it; the servants drive them away; they return continually. Jesus could not permit any to treat these artless auditors harshly; he called them to him and embraced them. Mothers, encouraged by such a reception, brought him their nurselings that he might touch them. Women came to pour oil upon his head and perfumes upon his feet. His disciples repulsed them at times as importunate; but Jesus, who loved old customs and all that indicates simplicity of heart, repaired the evil done by his overzealous friends. He protected those who desired to honour him. So the children and the women adored him. The reproach of alienating from their families these delicate beings, always easily charmed away, was one of those oftenest made by his enemies.

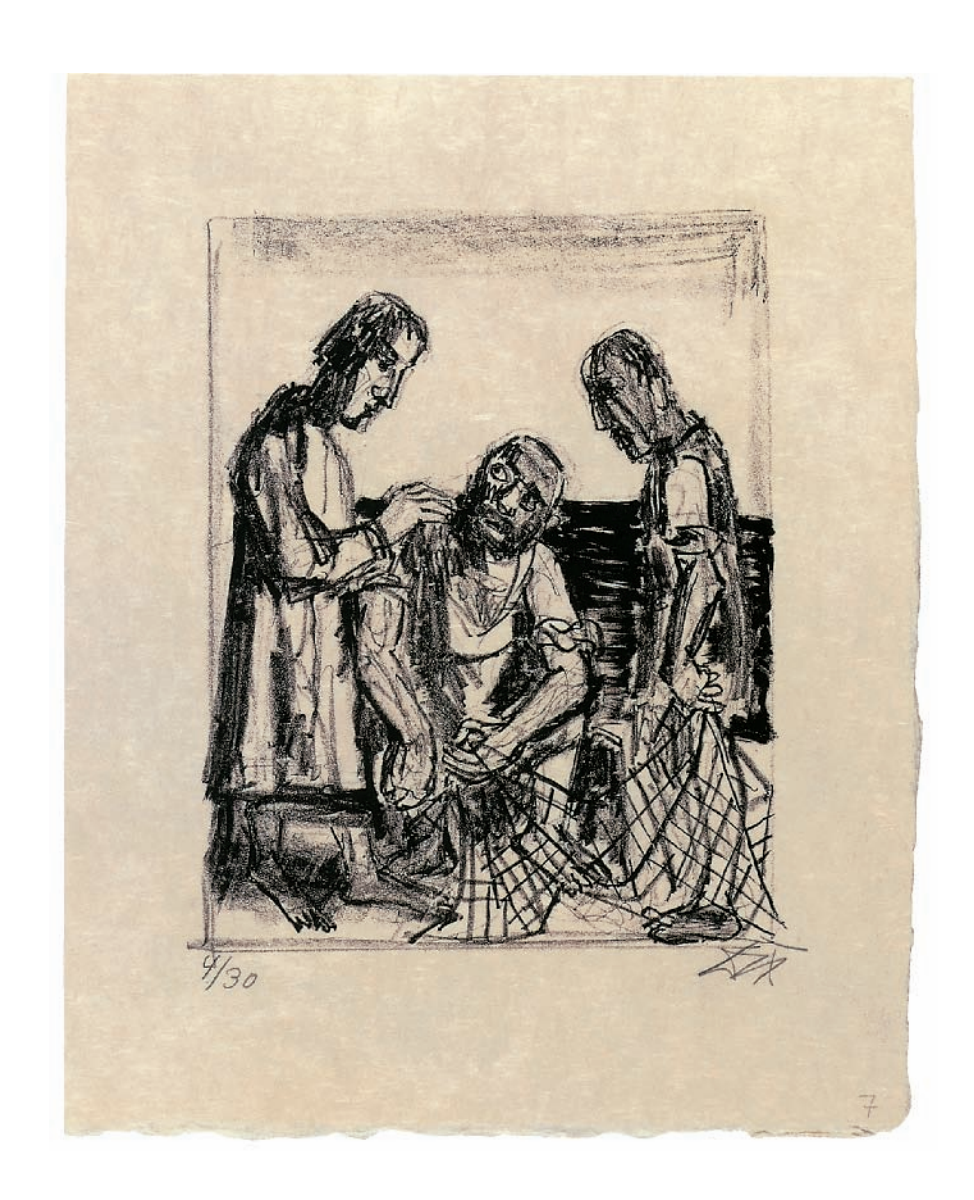
The infant religion was thus in many respects a movement of women and children. These last formed about Jesus, as it were, a young guard in the inauguration of his innocent royalty, and bestowed little ovations upon him with which he was much pleased, calling him "son of David," crying Hosanna and bearing palms around him. Jesus, like Savonarola, used them perhaps as instruments for pious missions; he was pleased to see these young apostles, who did not compromise him, rushing in advance, and bestowing titles upon him which he dared not take himself. He did not check them, and when asked if he heard, he responded evasively that the praise which falls from young lips is the most pleasing to God.

He lost no occasion to repeat that the little ones are sacred beings, that the kingdom of God belongs to the little children, that it is necessary to become a little child in order to enter it, that it must be received as a little child, that the heavenly Father hides his secrets from the wise and reveals them unto babes. To him, the idea of his disciples is confounded with that of little children. One day, when they had among themselves one of those disputes concerning precedence, which were not rare, Jesus took a little child and set him in the midst of them, and said: "Behold the greatest; whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

It was childhood, indeed, in its divine spontaneity, in its innocent sparkles of joy, which was taking possession of the earth. All believed at every moment that the kingdom so intensely longed for was on the point of appearing. Each saw himself already seated upon a throne beside the master. They distributed the places; they sought to compute the day. It was called the "Good News" the doctrine had no other name. An old word, "paradise" which the Hebrew, like all the tongues of the East, had borrowed from the Persian, and which originally designated the parks of the Achsemenides, summed up the dreams of all: "a delightful garden, in which they should continue forever the enchanting life that they were leading here below." How long did this intoxication last? We know not. None, during the course of this wonderful advent, measured time any more than we measure a dream. Duration

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio),
The Temptation of Christ, c. 1516-1525.
Oil on canvas, 89.8 x 69.6 cm.
Minneapolis Institute of Arts,
Minneapolis.





was suspended; a week was as a century. But whether it filled years or months, the dream was so beautiful that humanity has since lived by it, and it is our consolation yet to welcome its diminished perfume. Never did so much joy swell the breast of man. For a moment, in this effort, the most vigorous which it has ever made to raise itself above its planet, humanity forgot the leaden weight which fastens it to earth, and the woes of life here below. Blessed was he who could see with his eyes this divine outburst, and share, were it only for a day this peerless illusion! But more blessed still would Jesus tell us, he who, disenthralled from all illusions, shall reproduce in himself the heavenly advent, and, with no millennial dream, with no chimerical paradise, with no signs in the heavens, by the righteousness of his will and the poetry of his soul, shall create anew in his heart the true kingdom of God!

The Relationship of Jesus with the Pagans and the Samaritans.

In accordance with these principles, he disdained everything which was not the religion of the heart. The vain practices of devotees, external rigor, which relies upon grimaces for salvation, found in him a mortal enemy. He concerned himself little about the fasts. He preferred the forgiveness of an injury to a sacrifice. The love of God, charity, mutual forgiveness, this is all his law. The priest, by reason of his profession, urges always public sacrifice, of which he is the necessary minister. He diverts from private prayer, which is a means of dispensing with him. We should search the Gospel in vain for a

Otto Dix, *The Calling of the Disciple Peter,* 1960.
Lithograph, 29 x 23 cm.



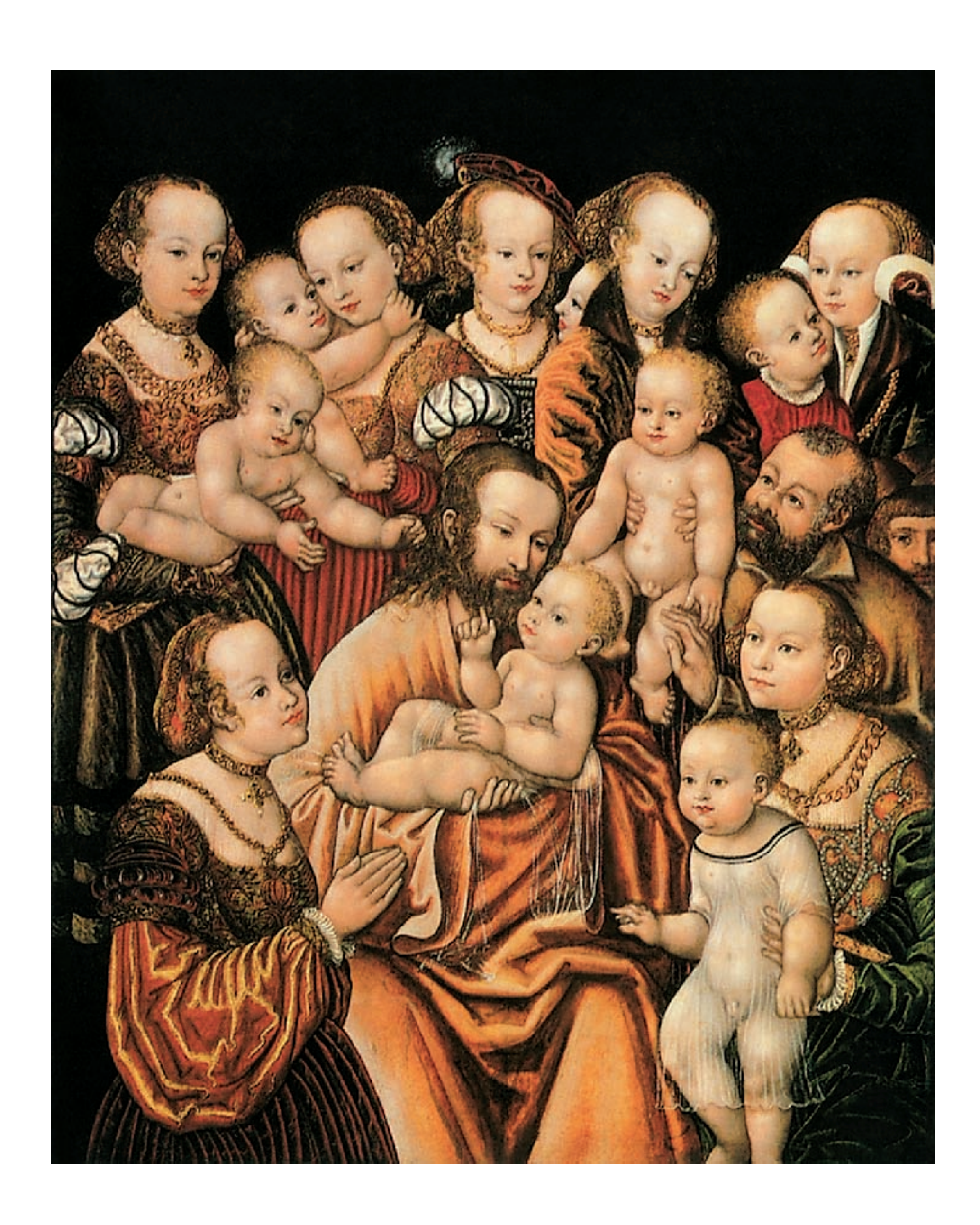
religious rite commanded by Jesus. Baptism was to him but a secondary importance; and as for prayer, it means nothing unless it comes from the heart. He often cited this passage from Isaiah: "This people honours me with their lips, but their heart is far from me."

The Sabbath was the cardinal point upon which was reared the edifice of pharisaic scruples and subtleties. This ancient and transcendent institution had become a pretext for miserable disputes to the casuists, and a source of superstitious beliefs. It was believed that nature observed it; all intermittent springs were considered a "sabbatical."

It was this point also upon which Jesus was most pleased to defy his adversaries. He openly violated the Sabbath, and responded to the reproaches which it brought upon him with cutting raillery. With stronger reason he condemned a multitude of modern observances, which tradition had added to the Law, and which, from this very fact, were most dear to the bigoted. Ablutions, fine-drawn distinctions between things pure and impure, he could not abide; "Can you also", he said to them, "wash your souls?" "Not that which goes into the mouth defiles a man, but that which cometh out of his heart." The Pharisees, the propagators of these mummeries, were the mark of all his blows. He accused them of overdoing the Law, of inventing impossible precepts in order to create among men occasions of sin; "Blind leaders of the blind, said he, take heed lest ye fall into the ditch. "Generation of vipers," added he in private, "they speak none but good things, but within they are bad; they lied in the proverb: 'Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.'"

Otto Dix, *The Temptation of Christ,* 1960.
Lithograph, 29 x 23 cm.


IC
XC
ΤΟ ΑΓΙΟΝ
ΜΑΝΔΗΛΙΟΝ



He did not know enough of the Gentiles to think of founding anything substantial upon their conversion. Galilee contained a great number of pagans, but not, it would seem, any public and organized worship of false gods. Jesus might have seen this worship flaunting in all its splendour in the country of Tyre and Sidon, at Caesarea-Philippi, and in Decapolis. He paid little attention to it. What strikes him in the pagans is not their idolatry, but their fervidity. The young Jewish democrat, in this a brother of Juda the Gailionite, admitting no master but God, was deeply wounded at the honours with which the persons of sovereigns were surrounded, and the titles, often mendacious, which were given them. Aside from this, in most cases, where he meets pagans, he shows great indulgence toward them; at times he declares that he has greater hopes of them than of the Jews. The kingdom of God will be transferred to them. "When the lord of a vineyard is dissatisfied with those to whom he has let it, what does he do? He lets it to others, who bring him good fruits." Jesus would cleave so much the more strongly to this idea, as the conversion of the Gentiles was, according to Jewish ideas, one of the most certain signs of the coming of the Messiah. In his kingdom of God, men sit at the feast, by the side of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who have come from the four winds of heaven, while the legitimate heirs of the kingdom are excluded. Often, it is true, we apparently find in the commands which he gives his disciples a directly contrary tendency; he seems to charge them to preach salvation only to the orthodox Jews. He speaks of pagans in a manner conformable to the prejudices of the Jews. But we must remember that the disciples, whose narrow understanding did not comprehend this lofty indifference to the condition of the sons of Abraham may well have caused the instructions of their master to bend

Icon of the Holy Face, 1384.
Paint on panel, 40 x 29 cm.
San Bartolomeo degli Armeni, Genoa.

Master HB of the Griffin Head,
Christ Blessing the Children, 1548.
Unknown medium on wood,
73 x 59.8 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



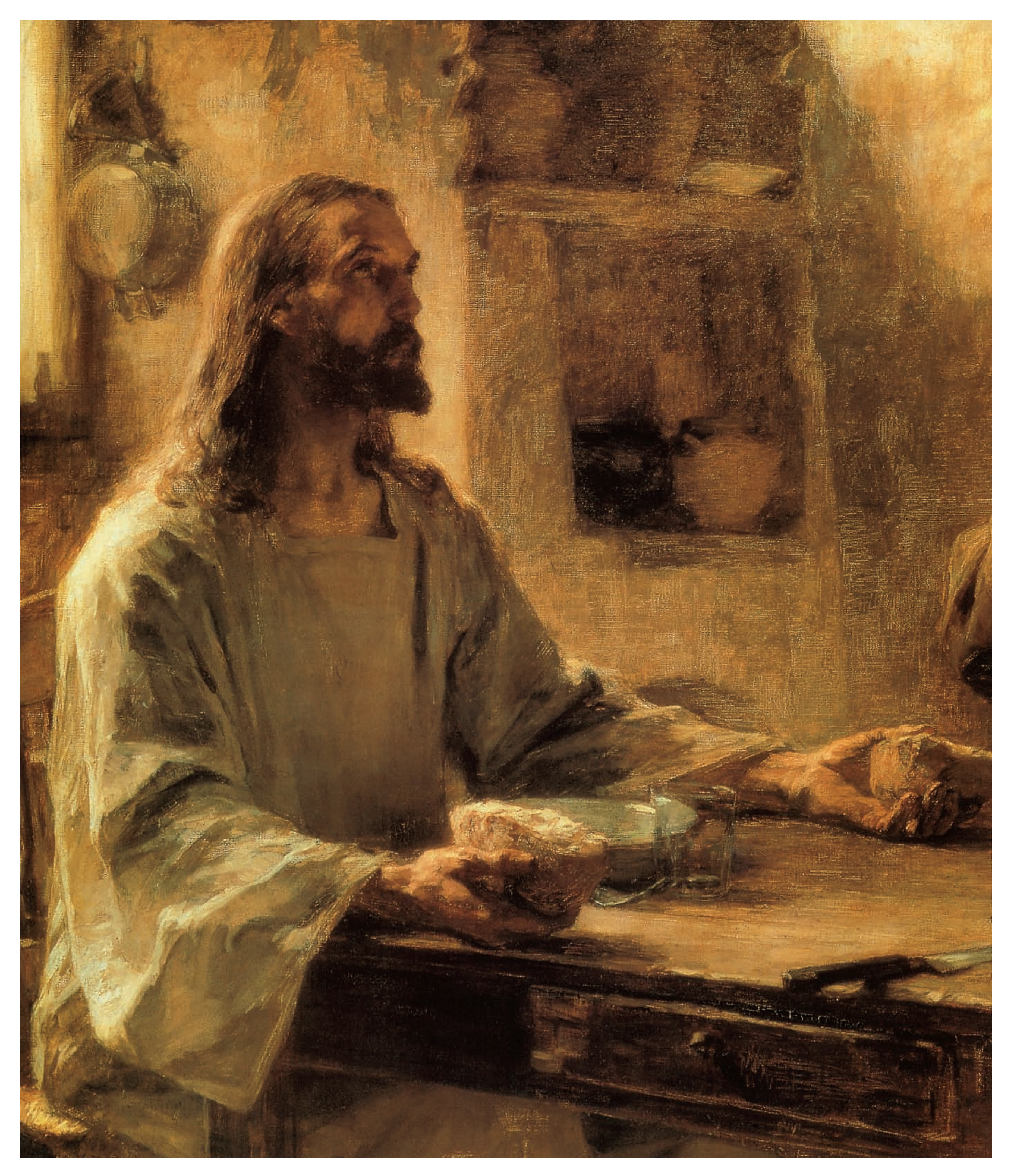
considerably in the direction of their own ideas. Besides, it is very possible that Jesus wavered upon this point. Tradition indeed attributes to Jesus two rules of proselytism that are in direct contradiction, which he may have practised by turns; He that is not against us is for us: "He that is not with me is against me." An impassioned struggle almost necessarily leads to such contradiction.

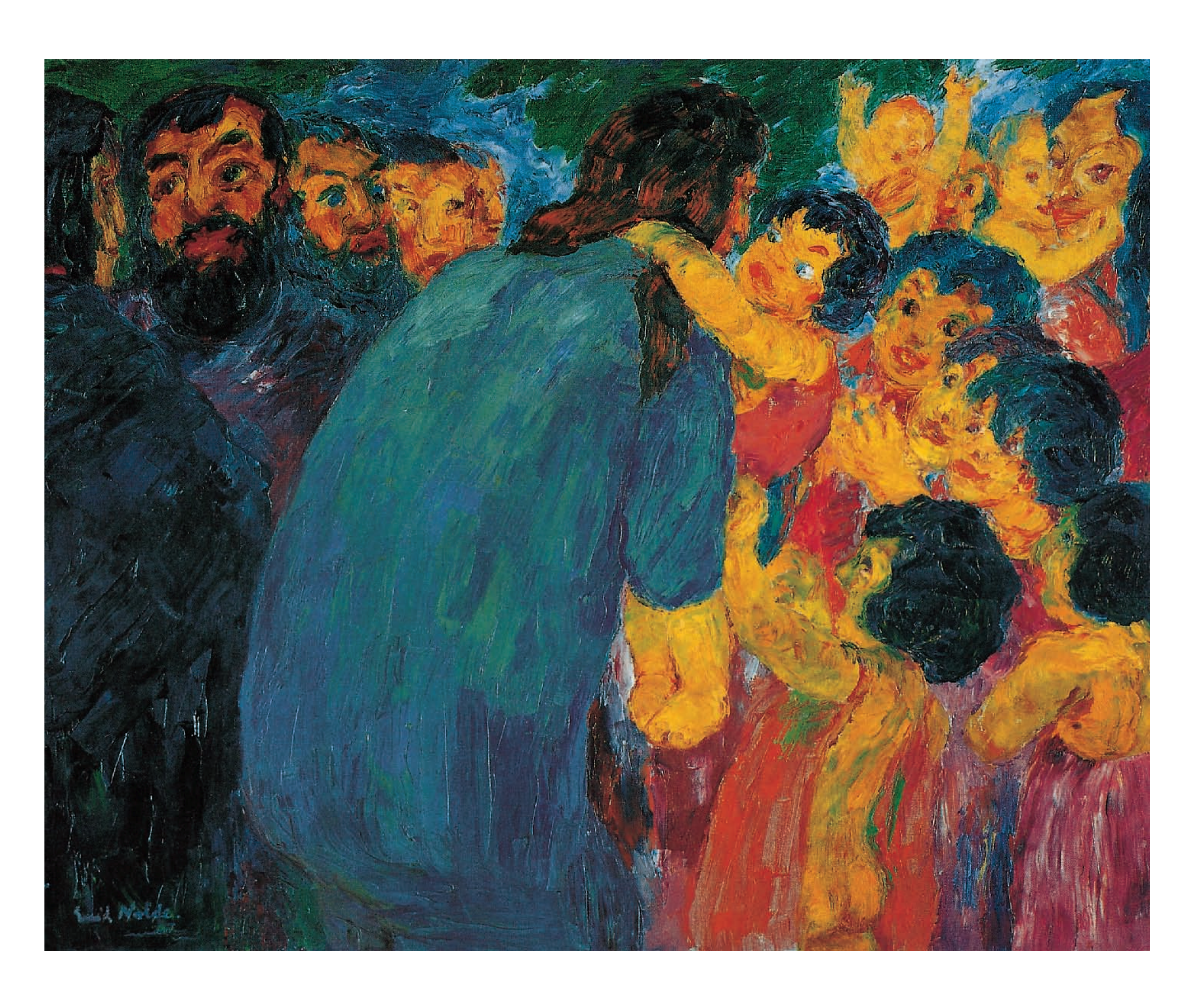
It is certain that he numbered among his disciples many whom the Jews called "Hellenes." This word had, in Palestine, very different meanings. It designated sometimes pagans, sometimes Jews speaking Greek and living among pagans, sometimes people of pagan origin converted to Judaism. Probably it is in this last category of Hellenes that Jesus found sympathy. Affiliation to Judaism had many degrees; but proselytes were always inferior to Jews by birth. Those of whom we now speak were called "proselytes of the gate," or "people fearing God," and were in subjection to the precepts of Noah, not to the Mosaic precepts. This very inferiority was doubtless the cause which brought them nearer to Jesus and secured them his favour.

He dealt in the same way with the Samaritans. Hemmed in like an islet, between the two great provinces of Judaism (Judea and Galilee), Samaria formed in Palestine a kind of independent territory, which preserved the old worship of Garizim, the brother and rival of that of Jerusalem. This poor sect, which had neither the genius nor the wise organization of Judaism proper, was treated by the Hierosolymites with extreme severity. They were placed upon the same level with the pagans.

Fritz von Uhde, *Let the Children Come to Me,* 1884.
Oil on canvas, 188 x 290.5 cm.
Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig.

Léon Augustin Lhermitte, *Friend of the Humble (Supper at Emmaus)* (detail), 1892.
Oil on canvas, 155.5 x 222.9 cm.
Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.





Jesus, by a sort of opposition, was kindly disposed towards them. If, in other cases, he seems to forbid his disciples to go and preach to them, reserving his Gospel for the pure Israelites, this also is undoubtedly a precept dictated by circumstances to which the apostles may have given too absolute a meaning. Sometimes, indeed, the Samaritans gave him an ill-reception, because they supposed him imbued with the prejudices of his co-religionists. Jesus rose above these misconceptions. He had many disciples at Shechem, and lie spent there at least two days. In one instance, he finds gratitude and true piety only in a Samaritan. One of his most beautiful parables is that of the man wounded upon the road to Jericho. A priest passes him, sees him and continues his way. A Levite passes and does not stop. A Samaritan has pity on him, goes to him, pours oil into his wounds and binds them up. Jesus concludes from this that true fraternity is established among men by charity, not by religious faith. The "neighbour," who in Judaism was only the co-religionist, is to him that man who has pity on his kind without distinction of sect. Human brotherhood in the broadest sense overflows from all his teachings.

These thoughts, which beset Jesus on his departure from Jerusalem, found living expression in an anecdote which has been preserved on his return. The road from Jerusalem to Galilee passes within half an hour's journey from Shechem, before the opening of the valley overlooked by Mounts Ebal and Garizim. This route is in general avoided by the pilgrim Jews, who made the long circuit of Persia in their journeys rather than to expose themselves to the affronts of the Samaritans or to ask anything of them. It was unlawful to eat or drink with them; it was an axiom of certain casuists that "a bit of the Samaritans' bread is swine's flesh. "When they took that route, they supplied themselves with provisions in advance; yet they rarely avoided quarrels and ill-treatment. Jesus partook neither of these scruples nor these fears. Reaching on his journey the point where the valley of Shechem opens upon the left, he felt weary, and stopped near a well. The Samaritans had the custom of giving to all the places in their valley, names drawn from patriarchal remembrances; they regarded this well as having been given by Jacob to Joseph; it was probably the very same which is even yet called Bir-Iakoub, The disciples entered the valley and went to the town to buy provisions; Jesus seated himself upon the brink of the well, looking towards Garizim.

It was about noon. A woman of Shechem came to draw water. Jesus asked to drink, which excited great astonishment in the woman, the Jews ordinarily interdicting themselves from all dealings with the Samaritans. Won over by the conversation of Jesus, the woman recognized in him a prophet, and, expecting reproaches upon her worship, she took the lead: "Lord," said she, "our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say that Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." "Woman, believe me," Jesus responded to her, "the hour cometh when ye shall worship neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, but when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth."

On the day when he pronounced these words, he was indeed the son of God. He for the first time gave utterance to the idea upon which shall rest the edifice of the everlasting religion. He founded the pure worship, of no age, of no clime, which shall be that of all lofty souls to the end of time. Not only was his religion, that day, the benign religion of humanity, but it was the absolute religion; and if other planets have inhabitants endowed with reason and morality, their religion cannot be different from that which Jesus proclaimed at Jacob's well. Man has not been able to abide by this worship; we attain the ideal only for a moment. The words of Jesus were a gleam in that night; it has taken two thousand years for the eyes of humanity (what do I say of an infinitely small portion of humanity) to learn to abide it. But the gleam shall become the full day and, after passing through all the circles of error, humanity will return to these words, as to the immortal expression of its faith and its hopes.

Emil Nolde, *Christ and the Children,* 1910.
Oil on canvas, 86.8 x 106.4 cm.
The Museum of Modern Art, New York.



Christ the Messiah

Jesus returned to Galilee having completely lost his Jewish faith, and in full revolutionary ardour. His ideas are now expressed with perfect clearness. The innocent aphorisms of his first prophetic age, borrowed in part from preceding masters, the beautiful moral teachings of his second period, resulted in a decided policy. The law was to be abolished, with he himself is to abolish it. The Messiah had come and he himself was the Messiah. The kingdom of God was soon to reveal itself; by him it was to be revealed. He knew well that he would be the victim of his own daring, but the kingdom of God could not be conquered without violence; it is by crises and anguish that it must be established. The son of man, after his death, will come in glory, accompanied by legions of angels, and those who have denied him shall be confounded.

The boldness of such a conception must not surprise us. Jesus had long considered the relationship between himself and God to be that of son and a father. What in others would have been insupportable arrogance, in him cannot be treated as unlawful.

The title of "son of David" was the first that he accepted, probably without being concerned in the innocent frauds by which it was sought to secure it to him. The family of David had become, it would seem, long since extinct; the Asmoneans had never sought to attribute to themselves such a descent; neither Herod nor the Romans dreamed for a moment that there was among them any representative whatever of the rights of the ancient dynasty. But since the end of the Asmoneans, the dream of an unknown descendant of the old kings, who should avenge the nation of its enemies, agitated all minds. The universal belief was that the Messiah would be a son of David, born like him, at Bethlehem. The first conception of Jesus was not precisely that. The memory of David, which preoccupied the mass of the Jews, had nothing in common with his kingdom of heaven. He believed himself the son of God, and not the son of David. His kingdom, and the deliverance which he meditated were of an entirely different order. But popular opinion on this point, did him a species of violence. The immediate consequence of this proposition: "Jesus is the Messiah," was this other proposition: "Jesus is the son of David" He submitted to receive a title without which he could hope for no success. He finally, it seems, took pleasure in it, for he performed most graciously those miracles that were sought of him in this name. Here as in many other circumstances of his life, Jesus conformed to the ideas which were current in his time although they were not precisely his own. He associated with his dogma of the "kingdom of God," all that warmed the heart and the imagination. Thus have we seen him adopt the baptism of John, which, however, could have been of no great importance to him.

A grave difficulty presented itself; his birth at Nazareth, which was a matter of public notoriety. We do not know whether Jesus attempted to answer this objection. Perhaps it was not made in Galilee, where the idea that the son of David must be from Bethlehem, was less common. To the idealistic Galilean, moreover, the title of "son of David," was sufficiently justified, if he to whom it was given renewed the glory of his race, and brought back again the great days of Israel. Did he, by his silence, authorize the fictitious genealogies which his partisans imagined in order to prove his royal descent. Did he know anything of the legends invented to fix his birth at Bethlehem, and in particular of the feat by which his Bethlehemite origin was connected with the assessment made by the imperial legate, Quirinius. The inexactitude and the contradictions of the genealogies induce the belief that they were the result of a popular labour, working at different points, and that none of them were sanctioned by Jesus. Never did he designate himself with his own lips as the son of

Raphael (Raffaello Sanzio), *The Transfiguration,* 1515-1520. Tempera grassa on wood, 410 x 279 cm. Musei Vaticani, Vatican.

Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *The Infant Christ Asleep on the Cross,* 1670s. Oil on canvas, 141 x 108 cm. Museums Sheffield, Graves Gallery, Sheffield. (p. 130)

Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, *The Heavenly and Earthly Trinities,* c. 1675-1682. Oil on canvas, 293 x 207 cm. The National Gallery, London. (p. 131)







David. His disciples, much less enlightened than he, heightened at times what he said of himself; oftenest he had no knowledge of these exaggerations. We must add that during the three first centuries, large portions of Christians obstinately denied the royal descent of Jesus, and the authenticity of the genealogies.

His legend was thus the fruit of a great, altogether spontaneous conspiracy, and was worked out about him while he was yet alive. No great event of history has passed without giving rise to a cycle of fables, and Jesus could not, had he wished, have silenced these popular creations. Perhaps a sagacious eye could have recognized, even then, the germ of the stories which were to attribute to him a supernatural birth, either in consequence of the notion generally received in antiquity, that the extraordinary man cannot be born of the ordinary relations between the sexes; or to fulfil a misunderstood chapter of Isaiah, in which a prophecy was seen, that the Messiah should be born of a virgin; or finally to carry out the idea that the "Breath of God," already set up in the divine hypostasis, is a principle of fecundity. Even then, perhaps, there circulated concerning his childhood more than one anecdote intended to show in his biography the accomplishment of the Messianic ideal, or, to speak more correctly, of the policies which the allegorical exegesis of the time upheld to the Messiah. At other times, there were created for him relations from the cradle with celebrated men, John the Baptist, Herod the Great, who, it was said, about that time made a journey to Jerusalem, two aged persons, Simeon and Anna, who had left memories of lofty sanctity. A rather loose chronology presided over these combinations, which were for the most part founded upon real distorted occurrences. But a singular spirit of sweetness and of goodness, a profoundly popular sentiment, penetrated all these fables, and made them a supplement to the teachings. After the death of Jesus especially, such stories were largely developed. We may believe, however, that they were already in circulation while he was living, without encountering anything more than a pious credulity and an artless wonder.

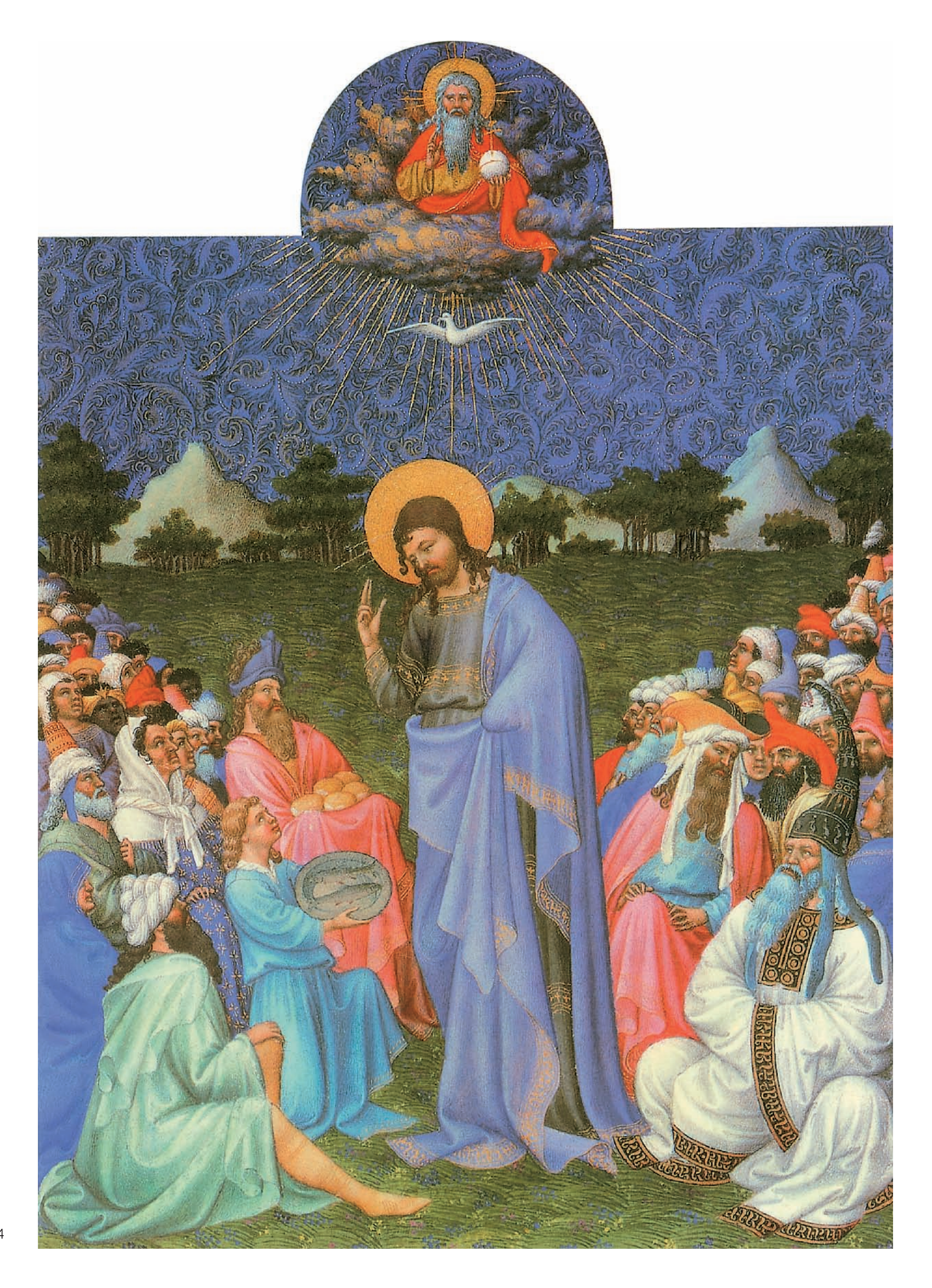
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo,
Christ Healing the Paralytic at the Pool of Bethesda, 1667-1670.
Oil on canvas, 237 x 261 cm.
The National Gallery, London.



That Jesus had never thought of passing for an incarnation of God, we cannot doubt. Sometimes even Jesus seems to take precautions to repel such a doctrine. The accusation that he made himself God or the equal of God is presented, even in the Gospel of John, as a calumny of the Jews. In this last gospel, he declares that he is less than his Father. Besides, he avows that the Father has not revealed all things to him. He believes himself more than an ordinary man, but separated from God by an infinite distance. He is the son of God; but all men are so or may become so in diverse degrees. All men, every day, ought to call God their father; all the resurrected will be sons of God. The divine generation was attributed in the Old Testament to beings for whom was made no pretension of equality with God. The word "son" has, in the Semitic tongues, and in the language of the New Testament, the largest range of meaning. Besides, the idea which Jesus forms of man is not this humble idea which a cold deism has introduced. In his poetic conception of nature, one breath only penetrates the universe; the breath of man is that of God; God dwells in man and lives as man, even as man dwells in God and lives by God. The transcendent idealism of Jesus never permitted him to have a very clear idea of his own personality. He is his Father; his Father is he, He lives in his disciples; he is everywhere with them; his disciples are one, as he and his Father are one. The idea to him is everything; the body, which makes the distinction of persons, is nothing.

The title of "son of God" or simply of "son," thus became to Jesus a title analogous to '"son of man," and, like it, a synonym of "Messiah." With this difference only, that he called himself "son of man," and that he does not seem to have made the same use of the expression "son of God." The title son of man expressed his character as judge; that of son of God his participation in the supreme designs and his power. This power has no limits. His Father has given him all power. He has a right to change even the Sabbath. None knows the Father except through him. The Father has transmitted to him the exclusive right to judge.

El Greco (Domenikos Theotokópoulos), *The Miracle of Christ Healing the Blind Man,* 1572. Oil on canvas, 51 x 61 cm. Galería Nacional de Parma, Parma.



Nature obeys him, but it also obeys whoever believes and prays; faith can accomplish all things. We must remember that no idea of the laws of Nature existed in his mind, or in the minds of his auditors, to mark the limits of the possible. The witnesses of his miracles thanked God "for having given such power to men." He forgives sins; he is superior to David, to Abraham, to Solomon, and to the prophets. We know neither under what form nor to what extent these affirmations were produced. Jesus cannot be judged by the rule of our petty propriety. The admiration of his disciples overwhelmed him and carried him away. It is evident that the his first title, with which he was content, no longer sufficed; the title of prophet even or of messenger of God did not respond to his idea. The position which he attributed to himself was that of a superhuman being, and he wished to be regarded as having a more elevated communion with God than other men. But we must realize that the words "superhuman" and "supernatural", borrowed from our narrow theology, had no meaning in the high religious consciousness of Jesus. To him, nature and the development of humanity were not limited kingdoms outside of God, pitiful realities, or subjected to the laws of a hopeless empiricism. Nothing was supernatural to him, for there was no nature. Intoxicated with infinite love, he forgot the heavy chain which holds the spirit captive. He leaped in one bound over the abyss, insurmountable to the multitude, which the mediocrity of the human faculty traces between man and God.

We do not deny that there was in these affirmations of Jesus the germ of the doctrine which was afterwards to make him a divine support, identifying him with the Word, "second God," or eldest son of God. A species of necessity led this theology in order to correct the extreme rigor of ancient monotheism, to place God near an assistant judge, to whom the Eternal Father was reputed to delegate the government of the universe. The belief that certain men are incarnations of divine faculties or "powers," was widespread. The Samaritans had now a wonder-worker named Simon who was identified with "the great power of God."* For nearly two centuries, the speculative minds of Judaism had yielded to the propensity to make distinct personalities of the divine attributes or of certain expressions which related to the divinity. Thus the "Breath of God," which is often mentioned in the Old Testament, is considered as a separate being than the "Holy Spirit." In the same way, the "Wisdom of God," the "Word of God," become persons existing by themselves. This was the process which engendered the Sephiroth of the Cabbala and the Christian hypostases. All this dry mythology that consisted of personified abstractions, to which monotheism is obliged to have recourse, introduced multiplicity into the idea of God.

Jesus appears to have remained a stranger to these refinements of theology, which were very soon going to fill the world with sterile discussions. The metaphysical theory of the Word, as we find it in the writings of his cotemporary Philo, in the Chaldean Targums, and previously in the book of "Wisdom", which is not perceptible either in the Logia of Matthew, or in general in the synoptic, interpretations that are extremely authentic of the words of Jesus. The doctrine of the Word, indeed, had nothing in common with Messianism. The Word of Philo and of the Targums was in no way the Messiah. It is John the Evangelist, or more specifically his school, that afterwards sought to prove that Jesus is the Word, and He who created, from this stand-point, an entirely new theology that is very different from that of the kingdom of God. The essential character of the Word is that of the creator and of the providence. Jesus never claimed to have created the world, nor to govern it. His portion will be to judge it and to renew it. The character to judge of the final trial of humanity, such is the essential attribute which Jesus attributes to himself, the character that all the first Christians gave him. Until that great day he sits at the right hand of God as his prime minister and his future avenger. The superhuman Christ of the Byzantine is seated as the judge of the world, in the midst of the apostles, who are analogous to himself and superior to the angels who only stand and wait. He is the exact representation of that conception of the "son of man," the first traits which we find so strongly indicated already in the Book of Daniel.

Limbourg Brothers, *The Multiplication of the Loaves and Fishes, from Les Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry,* c. 1413. Miniature on parchment, 29 x 21 cm. Musée Condé, Chantilly.

At any rate, the rigor of a premeditated scholasticism did not belong to such a world. The whole mass of ideas that we have set forth formed, in the minds of the disciples, a theological system so far from fixed that they make the Son of God act merely as man. He was tempted, he was ignorant of many things; he corrected himself, he was dejected, discouraged, he asked his Father to spare him trials; he was submissive to God like a son. He who is to be the judge of the world does not know the day of judgment. He takes precautions for his safety! Shortly after his birth, it was necessary to keep him a secret to avoid the powerful men who desired to kill him. In exorcisms, the devil wrangles with him and does not go right away. In his miracles a painful effort is perceived, a weariness as if something had gone out of him. All this was simply the work of a messenger of God, a man protected and favoured by God. We must ask here neither logic nor consistency. Jesus' need to yield himself to the faith and enthusiasm of his disciples piled up contradictory notions. To the Messianists of the millenarian school, the excited readers of the books of Daniel and Enoch, he was the son of man. To the Jews of the common faith, to the readers of Isaiah and Micah, he was the son of David, and to the afflicted he was the Son of God, or simply the Son. Others, without being blamed for it by the disciples, believed him to be John the Baptist alive again, Elias, or Jeremiah, according to the popular belief that the ancient prophets should awaken to prepare the way of the Messiah.

An absolute conviction, or to speak more correctly, enthusiasm, which deprived him even of the possibility of doubt, covered all this hardihood. We can but feebly comprehend, with our cold and timorous natures, such a mariner being possessed by the idea of which he makes himself the apostle. People are profoundly serious and conviction means sincerity with ourselves. But sincerity with ourselves had not much meaning among People who are little accustomed to the delicacy of the critical mind. Good faith and imposture are words which, in a rigid conscience, are opposed like two irreconcilable terms. The authors of the apocryphal books, (of Daniel and of Enoch, for example) exalted as they were, committed for their cause, and most certainly without the shadow of a scruple, an act which we should call a forgery. Material truth had very little value – the author he sees everything through his ideas, his interests and his passions.

History is impossible, unless we resolutely admit that there are many degrees of truth. All great things are achieved by people; now people are led only by yielding to their ideas. The philosopher who, knowing this, isolates and entrenches himself in his nobility, is to be greatly praised. But he who takes humanity with its illusions, and seeks to act upon it and with it, cannot be blamed. Caesar knew very well that he was not the son of Venus; France would not be what she is had she not believed for a thousand years in the sacred ampulla of Rheims. It is easy for us to call this falsehood, and, proud of our timid honesty, to treat with contempt the heroes who were accepted under other conditions in the battle of life. When we are done with our scruples, we shall have the right to be severe upon them. At least we must make a broad destitution between societies in which everything took place in the maturity of reflection, and the simple and credulous societies in which the faiths were born which have mastered the centuries. There is no great foundation which does not repose upon a legend. The only guilt in such a case is that of humanity which will be deceived.

Miracles

Two means of proof only, miracles and the fulfilment of the prophecies, could, in the opinion of the contemporaries of Jesus, establish a supernatural mission. Jesus, and especially his disciples, employed these two methods of demonstration with perfect good faith. For a long time Jesus had been convinced that the prophets had written only in view of him. He found himself in their sacred oracles; he looked upon

Veronese (Caliari Paolo), *The Wedding Feast at Cana*, c. 1562-1563.
Oil on canvas, 677 x 994 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.





himself as the mirror in which all the prophetic spirit of Israel had read the future. The Christian school, perhaps even during the life of its founder, sought to prove that Jesus corresponded perfectly to all that the prophets had predicted of the Messiah. In many cases, the correspondences were altogether exterior and hardly recognizable to us. It was usually fortuitous or insignificant circumstances in the life of the Master that reminded the disciples of certain passages of the Psalms and the prophets, which, by reason of their constant preoccupation, they saw as references to him. The exegesis of the times thus consisted almost entirely in plays upon words, and in citations made in an artificial and arbitrary manner. The synagogue had no list officially fixed on the passages which related to the future reign. The Messianic applications were free, and constituted more artifices of style than a serious mode of argument.

As for miracles, they were considered, at that time, the indispensable mark of the divine and the sign of the prophetic calling. The legends of Elijah and Elisha were full of them. It was the received opinion that the Messiah would perform many. A few miles from the place where Jesus dwelt, in Samaria, a magician named Simon created a character almost divine for himself by his illusions. Afterwards, when it was desired to found the fame of Apollonius of Tyana and to prove that his life had been the visit of a God to the earth, it was thought that in order to succeed in this, a vast round of miracles must be invented as his work. The Alexandrian philosophers themselves, Plotinus and the rest, were reputed to have performed them. Jesus had therefore to choose between these two alternatives: either to renounce his mission, or to become a miracle worker. We must remember that in all antiquity, with the exception of the great scientific schools of Greece and their Roman adepts, accepted miracles. Jesus, not only believed in them, but had not the least idea of a natural order governed by laws. His knowledge on this point was

The Filling of the Water Pots at the Miracle of Cana, c. 650.
Carved ivory, 11.3 x 9.2 x .8 cm.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

not superior to that of his contemporaries. Moreover, one of his most deeply rooted opinions was that "with faith and prayer man has all power over nature." The faculty of performing miracles was considered a licence regularly imparted by God to men, and was not at all surprising.

Time has changed into something very grievous to us that which was the power of the great founder, and if ever the worship of Jesus grows feeble in the heart of humanity, it will be because of those very acts which made men believe in him. Criticism experienced before these historical phenomena no embarrassment. A thaumaturge of our day, unless he is of an extreme naiveté, is odious, for he performs miracles without believing in them; he is a charlatan. He performs miracles without believing in them, but if we take a Francis of Assisi, the question is altogether different. The miraculous cycle of the birth of the order of St. Francis caused great pleasure. The founders of Christianity lived in a state of poetic ignorance at least as complete as St. Clair and the Third Order. They thought it very natural that their master should have interviews with Moses and Elias, that he should command the elements, and that he should heal the sick. We must remember, besides, that every idea loses some of its purity when it aspires to realization. We never succeed but that the delicacy of the soul experiences some shocks. Such is the feebleness of the human mind, that the best causes are ordinarily gained only for bad reason. The demonstrations of the primitive expounders of Christianity rest upon the weakest arguments. It is probable that the masses were more struck by his miracles than by his deeply divine teachings. We must add that undoubtedly popular fame, before and after the death of Jesus, enormously exaggerated the number of acts of this kind. The types of the evangelical miracles, indeed, do not present much variety; they repeat each other and seem traced over a very small number of patterns, fitted to the taste of the country.

It is impossible, among the miraculous stories, that the wearisome enumeration that the Gospels contain to distinguish the miracles which have been attributed to Jesus by popular opinion or from those in which he consented to take an active part. It is impossible above all to know whether the ungracious circumstances of exertion, groans, and other traits characteristic of jugglery are really historic or are the fruit of the belief of different compilers, who were inclined to magic, and living in this respect in a world analogous to that of the "spiritus"of our days. Almost all the miracles that Jesus was thought to have performed appear to have been miracles of healing. Scientific medicine, founded five centuries before by Greece was, in the time of Jesus, unknown to the Jews of Palestine. In such a condition of knowledge, treating the sick with gentleness and giving him by some sensible signs the assurance of his recovery was often a decisive remedy. Who dare say that in many cases, and apart from injuries of a decided character, the contrast of an exquisite person is not worth all the resources of pharmacy? The pleasure of seeing him healed, he gave what he could, a smile, a hope, and that is not unavailing.

Jesus had no education in a rational medical science any more than his contemporaries. He believed with all the world that cures were to be effected by religious rites, and such a faith was perfectly logical. From the moment that disease was regarded as the punishment of a sin or the work of a demon, not the result of physical causes, the best physician was the holy man who possessed power in the supernatural realm. Healing was considered a moral act and Jesus, who felt his moral force, must have believed himself specially endowed for healing. Persuaded that the touch of his garment, or the imposition of his hands did good to the sick, he would have been unfeeling had he refused to the suffering an alleviation that was in his power to accord. The cure of the sick was considered one of the signs in the kingdom of God, and always associated with the emancipation of the poor. Both were signs of the great revolution which was to end in the redress of all infirmities.

One of the cures which Jesus often performed was exorcism, or the casting out of devils. A singular readiness to believe in demons reigned in all minds. It was a universal opinion, not only in Judea, but in the whole world, that demons take possession of certain persons and make them act contrary to their own will. Epilepsy, the mental and nervous diseases, in which the patient seems to have lost all self-control, infirmities the cause of which is not apparent, like deafness and dumbness, were explained in the same manner. The admirable treatise of Hippocrates, "On the Sacred Disease," which founded, four centuries and a half before Jesus, the true principles of medicine upon that subject, had not banished from the world so great an error. It was supposed that there were processes more or less efficacious for driving away demons. The vocation of an exorcist was a regular profession like that of the physician. There is no doubt that Jesus had, during his lifetime, the reputation of possessing the deepest secrets of that art. There were then many lunatics in Judea, doubtless because of the great spiritual exaltation. These lunatics, who were permitted to wander about, lived in the abandoned sepulchral caves. Jesus had great effect upon them. There were stories told on the subject of his cures a multitude of strange happenings, in which all the credulity of the time gave itself full scope. But here again we must not exaggerate the difficulties. The disorders which they explained as possessions were often very slight. Nowadays, in Syria, they are regarded as lunatics or possessed of a demon; these two ideas are but one – that are only somewhat singular. A gentle word often sufficed in this case to drive away the demon. Such were doubtless the means employed by Jesus. Who knows whether his celebrity as an exorcist did not spread about without his knowing it? Persons who reside in the East are sometimes surprised to find themselves, after a little time, in possession of great renown as physician, sorcerer, or discoverer of treasures, without being able to get any satisfactory account of the facts which have given rise to these strange imaginings.

Many circumstances, moreover, seem to indicate that Jesus was a thaumaturgist only at a late period and against his will. Oftentimes he performed his miracles not until after solicitation, with a manifest disinclination, and while reproaching those who ask them for the grossness of their understanding. A singularity apparently inexplicable, was the care he takes to do his miracles privately and the injunction which he gives to those whom he heals to tell it to no man. When the demons desire to proclaim him son of God, he forbids them to open their mouths – it is in spite of himself that they confess him. These traits are especially prominent in Mark, who is above all the Evangelist of miracles and exorcisms. It seems that the disciple who furnished the principal materials for that Gospel importuned Jesus by his admiration for prodigies, and that the master, annoyed by a reputation which he felt to be a burden, often said to him: "Speak not of them." Once, this discord culminated in a singular explosion, an outburst of impatience, in which we perceive the weariness which these perpetual demands of feeble minds caused him. One would say, at times, that the part of the thaumaturgist is disagreeable to him, and that he seeks to give as little publicity as possible to the marvels which grow, as it were, under his feet. When his enemies asked him to perform a miracle, especially a celestial miracle, a meteor, he obstinately refused. We are then permitted to believe that his reputation as a miracle worker was imposed upon him, that he did not resist it very much, but that he did nothing to aid it, and that at all events he felt the emptiness of public opinion in this regard.

It would be departing from the correct historic methods to listen too much to this to our repugnance, and in order to evade the objections which might be raised against the character of Jesus, to suppress facts which, in the eyes of his contemporaries, were of the first order. It would be agreeable to say that these are additions of disciples far inferior to their master, who, unable to conceive his true grandeur, have sought to elevate him by illusions unworthy of him. But the four narrators of the life of Jesus are unanimous in vaunting his miracles. One of them, Mark, the interpreter of the apostle Peter, insists so

Fra Angelico, *The Resurrection of Lazarus,* c. 1450.
Tempera on wood, 39 x 39 cm.
Museo di San Marco, Florence.

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Resurrection of Lazarus,* 1608-1609.
Oil on canvas, 380 x 275 cm.
Museo Regionale di Messina, Messina.
(p. 142)

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn, *The Raising of Lazarus,* c. 1630.
Oil on panel, 96.4 x 81.3 cm.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles. (p. 143)









strongly upon this point that, if the character of Christ were traced exclusively according to his Gospel, he would be represented as an exorcist in possession of charms of rare efficiency, as a very powerful sorcerer, who inspires terror, and of whom men are glad to be rid. We will admit, therefore, unhesitatingly that acts which would now be considered traits of illusion or of hallucination, figured largely in the life of Jesus. Must we sacrifice to this unpleasant aspect of such a life its sublime aspect? Let us beware of it. A mere sorcerer after the manner of Simon the Magician could not have brought about a moral revolution like that which Jesus accomplished. If the miracle worker had erased, in Jesus, the moral and religious reformer, there would have sprung from him a school of magic, and not Christianity.

The problem, moreover, is presented in the same manner as to all saints and religious founders. Things which are now diseases, such as epilepsy and visions, were once an element of force and greatness. Almost down to our day, the men who have done most for the good of their kind (the excellent Vincent de Paul himself!) have been, whether they wished it or not, thaumaturgists. If we start with this principle, that every historic personage to whom acts have been attributed, which we in the twenty-first century hold to be senseless or charlatanic, has been a lunatic or a charlatan, the canons of criticism are violated. The school of Alexandria was a noble school, and yet it abandoned itself to the practice of an extravagant thaumaturgy. Socrates and Pascal were not exempt from hallucinations. Facts are to be explained by causes which are proportioned to them. The weaknesses of the human mind engender only weakness. Great things have always great causes in the nature of man, although often they are produced with a cortege of littleness which, to superficial understandings, obscure their grandeur.

In a general sense it is true to say that Jesus was a miracle worker and an exorcist only in spite of himself. Miracles are ordinarily the work of the public even more than of him to whom they are attributed. Jesus obstinately refused to perform the prodigies that the multitude had created for him. It would have been the greatest miracle had he not performed any; never would the laws of history and of popular psychology have suffered more downright abrogation. The miracles of Jesus were a violence done to him by his time, a concession which the necessity of the hour wrung from him. So the exorcist and the miracle worker have fallen; but the religious reformer shall live forever.

Even those who did not believe on him were struck by these acts, and sought to witness them. Many thought, perhaps, to use his name for seditious movements. But the altogether moral and not at all political direction of the character of Jesus saved him from these entanglements. His peculiar kingdom was, in the circle of children, a similar childlikeness of imagination and a like foretaste of heaven had gathered and held about him.

Institutions of Christ

What strongly proves, however, that Jesus was never entirely absorbed in his apocalyptic ideas, was that at the very time that he was most preoccupied with them, he was laying with the certainty the foundations of a church destined to endure. It is hardly possible to doubt that he himself had chosen among his disciples those who were called by the pre-eminence that the “apostles” or the “twelve,” since on the morning following his death, we find them forming a body, and filling by election the vacancies which had been produced among them. They were the two sons of Jonas, the two sons of Zebedee, James, son of Cleophas, Philip, Nathaniel bar-Tolmai, Thomas, Levi, son of Alpheus or Matthew, Simon the Canaanite,

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn,
The Woman Taken in Adultery, 1644.
Oil on oak, 83.8 x 65.4 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

Thaddeus or Lebbeus, and Judas Iscariot. It is probable that the idea of the twelve tribes of Israel had some relation to the choice of this number. The "twelve" formed a group of privileged disciples, in which Peter preserved his entirely fraternal pre-eminence, and to whom Jesus confided the charge of propagating his work. Nothing indicates the sacerdotal college regularly organized the lists of the "twelve" which have been preserved to us present many uncertainties and contradictions. Two or three of those who figure in them were not otherwise heard of. Two at least, Peter and Philip, were married and had children.

Jesus evidently imparted secrets to the twelve which he prohibited them from communicating to all. It seems at times that his plan was to envelope his person in some mystery, to postpone the great evidences until after his death, and to reveal himself completely only to his disciples, confiding to them the charge of demonstrating him afterwards to the world. "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops." This spared him too precise declarations, and created a kind of medium between public opinion and himself. There is no doubt that he reserved certain teachings for the apostles, and that he explained to them many parables, the meaning of which he left indefinite to the multitude, An enigmatical style and a small oddity in the connection of ideas were in vogue in the teacliing of the doctors, as is seen by the sayings of the Pirkei Avot. Jesus explained to his intimates what was strange in his apothegms or his apologues, and to them disengaged his teachings from the superfluity of compassions which at times obscured them. Many of these explanations have been carefully preserved.

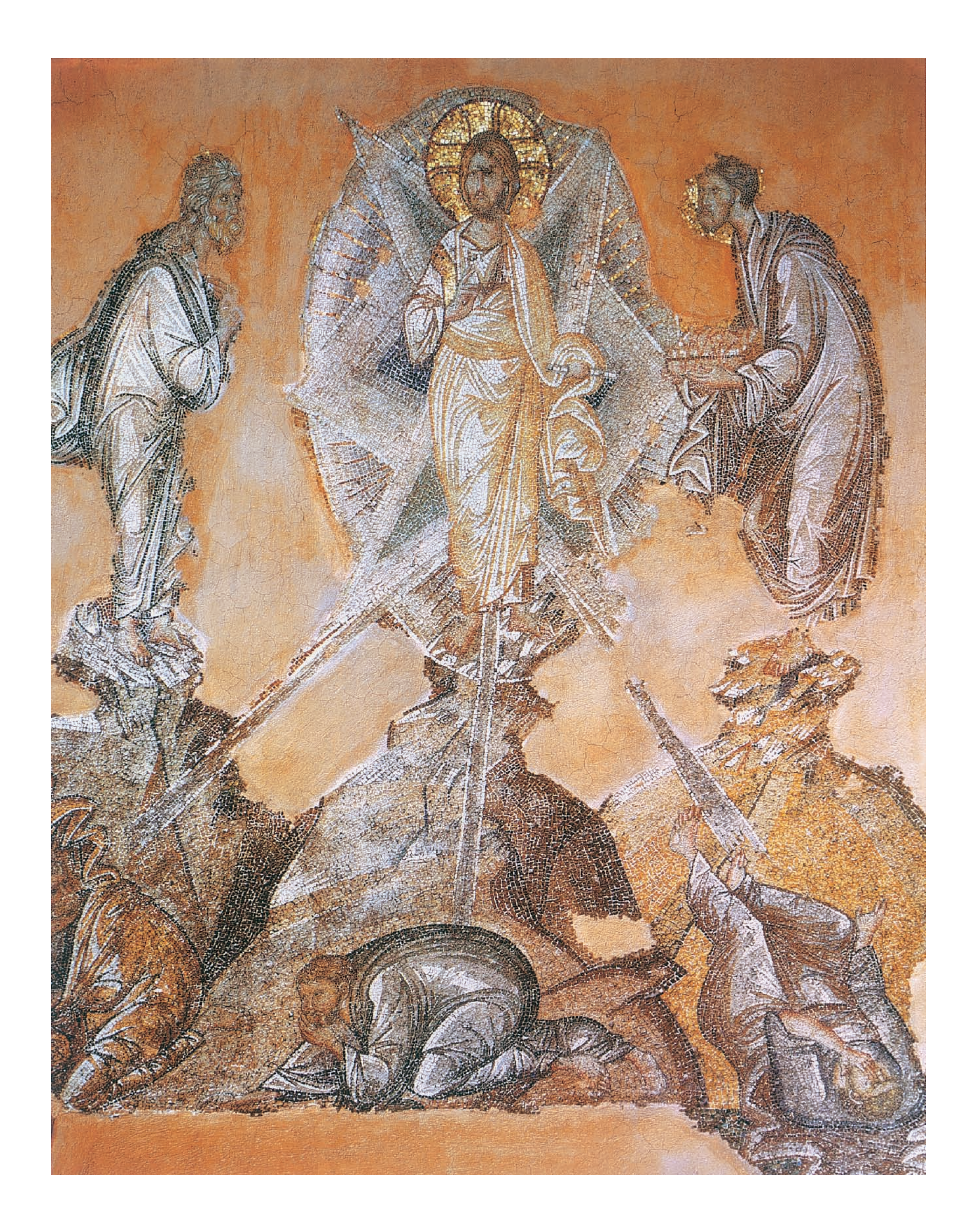
During the lifetime of Jesus, the apostles preached, but never separated themselves from him. Their preaching, moreover, was limited to the announcement of the coming of the kingdom of God. They went from city to city, receiving hospitality, or rather taking it of themselves according to the custom. The guest in the East has great authority; he is superior to the master of the house; the latter has in him the fullest confidence. This fireside preaching was excellent for the propagation of new doctrines. The hidden treasure is communicated; thus one pays for what he receives, while politeness and good relations helping, the household is touched and converted. Take away this hospitality, and the propagation of Christianity would be impossible to explain. Jesus, who held strongly to the good old customs, commanded his disciples to have no scruple about taking advantage of this ancient public right, even then probably abolished in the great towns where there were inns. "The laborer," said he, "is worthy of his hire." Once installed in any man's house, they were to remain there, eating and drinking what was offered them, so long as their mission lasted.

Jesus desired that, according to his example, the messengers of the good tidings should render their preaching lovely by polite and kindly manners. He wished that on entering a house they should give the wish of joy. Some hesitated, as this was a sign of religions communion, which was not risked with persons of doubtful faith. "Fear nothing," said Jesus; "if no one in the house is worthy of your selam it will turn to you again." Sometimes, the apostles of the kingdom of God were badly received, and came to complain to Jesus, who ordinarily sought to calm them. Some, persuaded of the omnipotence of the master, were displeased at this forbearance. The sons of Zebedee wished that he should call fire from heaven upon the inhospitable cities. Jesus received their importunities with his delicate irony, and stopped them with this: "I am not here to destroy souls, but to save them."

He sought in every way to establish the principle that his apostles were himself. It was believed that he had communicated to them his marvellous virtues. They cast out devils, prophesied, and formed a school of renowned exorcists, although certain cases were beyond their power. They performed cures as well, sometimes by the imposition of hands, sometimes by anointing with oil, one of the fundamental processes

Gustave Doré, *Christ Leaving the Praetorian (detail),* 1868.
Oil on canvas, 600 x 900 cm.
Musée des Beaux-Arts, Nantes.





of this type of medicine. In short, like the Psylli, they could handle serpents and drink deadly beverages with impunity. As we depart from Jesus, this theory becomes more and more offensive. But there is no doubt that it was a common practice in the ancient church, and that it figured as of highest importance in the attention of contemporaries. Charlatans, as ordinarily happens, took advantage of this movement of popular credulity. During the lifetime of Jesus, many who were not his disciples cast out devils in his name. The true disciples were very much displeased at this, and sought to prevent them. Jesus, who saw in it an acknowledgement of his renown, was not very severe towards them. We must observe, however, that these powers had to a certain extent become a profession. Carrying to the extreme the logic of the absurd, certain persons cast out devils by Beelzebub, the prince of devils. It was imagined that this sovereign of infernal legions must have full power over his subordinates, and that by working through him, they were sure of expelling the intruding spirit. Some sought even to buy from the disciples of Jesus the secret of the miraculous powers which had been conferred upon them.

The seed of a church thenceforth began to appear. This fruitful idea of the power of men united (ecclesia) seems to be an idea of Jesus. Full of his purely idealistic doctrine, that what produces the presence of Souls is communion through love. He declared that whenever a few should assemble in his name, he would be there in the midst of them. He confides to the church the right to bind or to loose (that is to say to render certain things lawful or unlawful), to remit sins, to reprimand, to warn with authority, to pray with the certainty of being heard. It is possible that many of these sayings have been attributed to the master in order to give a basis to the collective authority by which it was afterwards sought to replace his own. At any rate, it was not until after his death that individual churches were constituted by them, and yet this first constitution was made exactly upon the model of the synagogues. Many persons who had loved Jesus very much and founded great hopes upon him, like Joseph of Arimathea, Lazarus, Mary Magdalene and Nicodemus, did not enter these churches and remained content with the tender or respectful remembrance which they had preserved of him. Moreover, there is no trace, in the teaching of Jesus, of an applied morality or a canonical law, be it ever so ill-defined. Only once, in regard to marriage, he defines his position with clearness and defends divorce. No more theology, no symbolism. Nothing but a few ideas upon the Father, the Son, and the Spirit whence would afterwards be drawn to the Trinity and the Incarnation, but which were still in the state of indeterminate images. The last books of the Jewish canon already recognized the Holy Spirit, a species of divine hypostasis, sometimes identified with Wisdom or the Word. Jesus insisted upon this point, and announced to his disciples a baptism by fire and the Holy Ghost, far preferable to that of John, a baptism which they believed that they received upon a certain day, after the death of Jesus, under the form of a mighty wind and of tongues of fire.

The Holy Spirit thus sent by the Father will teach them every truth, and bear witness to those which Jesus himself has promulgated. Jesus, to designate this Spirit, made use of the word Percale which the Syro-Chaldaic had borrowed from the Greek – and which appears to have had in his mind the meaning of advocate, comforter, and sometimes that of interpreter of celestial truths, of a teacher charged with revealing to men mysteries yet concealed. He himself is regarded by his disciples as such and the Spirit which was to come after his death was purely to replace him. This was an application of the process which Jewish theology and Christian theology were to pursue for centuries, and which was to produce a whole series of divine intercessors. In Judaism, however, these creations were to rest upon individual and free speculations, while in Christianity, from the fourth century, they were to form the essence of the universal orthodoxy and dogma.

It is useless to remark how entirely foreign was the idea of a religious book, containing a code and articles of faith, to the thought of Jesus. He not only did not write, but it was contrary to the spirit of

The Transfiguration, 14th century.
Mosaic.
Church of Agioi Apostoloi, Thessaloniki.

The Transfiguration, end of the 16th century.
Ukrainian National Museum, Lviv. (p. 150)

The Transfiguration of Christ (fragment of Epistyle), 12th century.
Egg tempera on plaster on wood, 23.2 x 23.7 cm.
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. (p. 151)





the rising sect to produce sacred books. They believed themselves upon the eve of the grand final catastrophe. The Messiah came to put the seal upon the Law and the prophets, not to promulgate new texts. Thus, with the exception of the Apocalypse, which may be called the only revealed book of infant Christianity, all the other writings of the apostolic age are incidental productions, having no pretension whatever to furnish a complete system of doctrine. The Gospels had at first an altogether private character, and an authority far inferior to that of tradition.

Nevertheless, had not the sect some sacrament, some rite, some rallying sign? It had one, which all traditions carry back to Jesus. One of the favourite ideas of the master is that he was the new bread, a bread superior to man and upon which humanity was to live. This idea was sometimes assumed as singularly concrete forms in his teachings. Once he allowed himself, in the synagogue of Capernaum, to take a bold step, which cost him many of his disciples. "Truly, truly, I say unto you, not Moses but my Father has given you the bread of heaven. "And he added: "I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger, and he that believeth in me shall never thirst." This speech excited loud murmurs. "What does he mean by these words: I am the bread of life? Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he says, I come down from heaven?" But Jesus continued still more forcibly: "I am the bread of life. Our fathers did eat manna in the wilderness and are dead, this is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat there of and not die;. I am the living bread; if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." The scandal was now at its height: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" Jesus rising still higher replies: "Truly, Truly I say unto you. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Who so eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, will have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. "For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, dwells in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats me, even he shall live by me. 'Tis the bread that came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of this bread shall live forever." Such persistency in paradox shocked many disciples who ceased to follow him. Jesus did not retract; he merely added: "It is the spirit that quickens; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I speak unto you are spirit and life." The twelve remained faithful, despite this strange preaching. It was to Cephas in particular an occasion for showing absolute devotion and proclaiming again: "Thou art the Christ, the son of God."

It is probable that thenceforward, in the ordinary meals of the sect, some usage was established in consonance with the discourse so ill-received by the people of Capernaum. But the apostolic traditions on this subject are very inconsistent and probably designedly incomplete. The synoptic gospels indicate an exclusively sacramental act serving as the basis of a mysterious rite, and they place its occurrence at the last Supper. John, who has particularly preserved the incident of the synagogue of Capernaum, spoke of no such act, although he recounted the last Supper very much at length. Moreover, we see Jesus recognized at the breaking of bread, as if this act were to those who followed him, that most characteristic of his person. When he was dead, he appeared to the pious recollections of his disciples as presiding over a mystic banquet, holding the bread, blessing it, and breaking it and presenting it to the guests. It is probable that this was one of his habits, and that at such moments he was peculiarly tender and lovely. A material circumstance, the presence of fish upon the table (a striking indication which proves that the rite took its origin upon the shore of Lake Tiberius), was itself almost sacramental, and became a necessary part of the images which were formed of the sacred festival.

Fra Angelico, *The Transfiguration* (detail), c. 1440-1441.
Fresco, 193 x 164 cm.
Convento di San Marco, Florence.





Titian (Tiziano Vecellio),
The Transfiguration of Christ,
c. 1560-1565.
Oil on canvas, 245 x 295 cm.
San Salvatore, Venice.

Meals had become in the small community the most charming occasions. At such times they met one another; the master spoke to each, and entered into a conversation full of cheer and charm. Jesus loved these hours and took pleasure in seeing his spiritual family thus grouped around him. Participation in the same bread was considered a sort of communion, a reciprocal bond. The master used extremely energetic terms in this respect, which were at a later day understood with unbridled literalness. Jesus is at once very idealistic in his conceptions and very materialistic in his expressions. Wishing to convey this thought that the believer lives only through him, that altogether (body, blood and soul) he was the life of the true believer, he said to his disciples: "I am your sustenance," a phrase which, turned into the figurative style, became: "My flesh is your bread, my blood is your drink." Then his habitual modes of speech, always strongly material, carried him still farther. At the table, pointing to the provisions,



he said: "Behold me" holding the bread, "This is my body," holding the wine: "This is my blood" all methods of speech which were equivalent to: "I am your sustenance."

This mysterious rite obtained great importance during the lifetime of Jesus. It was probably established some time before the last journey to Jerusalem, and was the result of general teaching, rather than of any determinate act. After the death of Jesus it became the grand symbol of the Christian communion, and it was by this most solemn moment of the life of the Saviour that its establishment was referred. They wished to see in the consecration of the bread and wine a farewell memorial which Jesus, at the moment of departing this life, had left to his disciples. Jesus himself was found again in this sacrament. The altogether spiritual idea of the presence of souls, one of those most familiar to the Master, which caused him to say, for example, that he was in person in the midst of his disciples when they were assembled in his name, rendered this easily admissible. Jesus, as we have already observed, never had any well defined idea of what constitutes individuality. At the height of exaltation to which he had arrived, the idea dominated all else to such a degree, that the body went for nothing. People are one when they love each other, when they live for one another. Had not he and his disciples been one? His disciples adopted the same language. Those who, for years, had lived by him, saw him always holding the bread, then the cup, "in his sacred and venerable hands," and offering himself to them. It was he whom they ate and whom they drank; he became the true Passover, the ancient one having been abrogated by his blood. It is impossible to translate into our essentially determinate language, in which the rigorous distinction of the literal from the metaphorical sense must always be preserved, manners of style, the essential characteristic of which is to give to metaphor, or rather to the idea, complete reality.

William Blake, *The Transfiguration,* date unknown.
Watercolour on paper, 37.7 x 32.2 cm.
Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Increasing Enthusiasm and Exaltation

It is clear that such a religions society, founded solely upon the expectation of the kingdom of God, must be in itself very incomplete. The first Christian generation lived entirely upon expectations and dreams. On the eve of seeing the world come to an end, they thought all things useless that serve only to continue the world. Property was forbidden. Everything which attaches man to earth, everything which turns him aside from heaven was to be shunned. Although many disciples were married, there was no marrying, it seems, after entrance into the sect. Celibacy was decidedly preferred; even in marriage, continence was commended. At one time, the master seemed to approve those who should mutilate themselves for the sake of the kingdom of God. He was in this consistent with his principle: "If thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell-fire" The cessation of generation was often considered the sign and the condition of the kingdom of God.

Never, had this primitive church formed a durable society, without the great variety of themes implanted by Jesus in his teaching. The same thing, moreover, took place in Buddhism, which was at first founded only for monks. The same thing would have happened in the order of St. Francis, if that order had succeeded in its claim to become the rule of all human society. Born as utopias, succeeding through their very exaggeration, the great foundations of which we speak shall fill the world only upon the condition of being profoundly modified, and of laying aside their excesses. Jesus did not survive this first period altogether monastic, in which men believe that they can with impunity attempt the impossible. He made no concession to necessity. He preached boldly war against nature, total rupture with kin. "Truly I say unto you," he said, "whosoever shall leave house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, shall receive a hundred fold more in this world, and in the world to come life everlasting."

The instructions which Jesus was said to have given to his disciples breathe the same exaltation. He, so yielding to those from outside his circle, who at times is pleased with partial converts, is for his own disciples of an extreme rigor. He would have no compromise. It might be called an "order "constituted by the most austere rules. Faithful to his idea that the cares of life trouble and debase man, Jesus demands of his associates an entire detachment from the world, an absolute devotion to his work. They were to carry with them neither money nor provisions for the journey, not even a scrip, nor a change of raiment. They were to practice absolute poverty, to live upon alms and hospitality. '"Freely, ye have received, freely give," said he in his beautiful language. "Arrested, dragged before the judges, let them prepare no defence; the celestial advocate, the Peraklit, will inspire what they should say. The Father will send them from on high his Spirit, which shall become the prime mover of all their actions, the director of their thoughts, their guide through the world. Driven out of a city, let them shake off the dust from their feet, warning the inhabitants at the same time, in order that they may not plead ignorance, of the proximity of the kingdom of God. Before you shall have gone over the cities of Israel, the son of man shall appear."

A strange ardour animates all these discourses, which may be in part the creation of the enthusiasm of the disciples, but even in this case came indirectly from Jesus, since the enthusiasm itself was his work. Jesus announced to those who choose to follow him great persecutions and the hatred of all men. He sent them as lambs into the midst of wolves. They were beaten in the synagogues and dragged to prison. The brother shall be delivered up by his brother and the son by his father. "When they are persecuted in one country let

William Holman Hunt, *The Light of the World,* c. 1852.
Oil on canvas, 49.8 x 26.1 cm.
Manchester Art Gallery, Manchester.





them flee to another." "The disciple," said he, "is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Whosoever, said he again, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father; but whosoever shall be ashamed of me before men, him will I deny before the angels, when I come in the glory of my Father, which is in heaven."

In these crises of rigor he went to the extent of suppressing the flesh. His demands lost all bounds. Despising the wholesome limits of human nature, he asks that men should exist only for him, that they should love him alone. "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." "Whosoever forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." Something more than human, something strange was then mingled with his words; it was like a fire devouring life at its root, and reducing everything to a frightful desert. The sad and bitter sentiment of disgust for the world, of utter abnegation, had for its founder, not the delicate and joyous moralist of the earlier days, but the sombre giant whom a sublime presentiment, as it were, was casting farther and farther forth from humanity. One would say that, in these moments of hostility to the most natural necessities of the heart, he had forgotten the pleasures of living, of loving, of seeing, and of feeling. Over passing all bounds, he dared to say: "If any man will be my disciple, let him deny himself and follow me! He that loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. Whosoever will save his life shall lose it; and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall gain it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" Two anecdotes, of the style which need not be accepted as historic, but which attempt to give a trait of character by exaggerating it, paint clearly this defiance thrown down to nature. He says to a man: "Follow me!" "Lord", replies the man, "suffer me first to go and bury my father." Jesus responds: "Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Another says to him: "Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go and put in order the affairs of my house." Jesus replies: "No man living put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kigdom of God." An extraordinary confidence, and at times accents of wonderful sweetness, overturning all our ideas, make these exaggerations acceptable. "Come unto me", he cried, "all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you; learn of me that I am weak and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Great danger resulted in the future from this exalted morality, expressed in a language of hyperbole and with a terrible energy. By virtue of detaching man from earth, life was shattered. The Christian will be praised for being a bad son and a bad patriot, if it is for Christ that he resists his father and combats his country. The antique city, the republic, mother of all, the State, the common law of all, are arrayed in hostility to the kingdom of God. A fatal germ of theocracy was introduced into the world.

Another consequence is dimly seen henceforth. Transported into a calm condition and into the midst of a society confident of its own duration, this morality, made for a critical moment, would seem impossible. The Gospel was thus destined to become to Christians a Utopia, which very few would trouble themselves to realize. These awful maxims were, for the mass, to sleep in a deep oblivion, aided by the clergy themselves; the gospel man will be a dangerous man. Of all human beings, the most selfish, the most arrogant, the most severe, the most attached to earth, a Louis XIV, for example, was to find priests to persuade him, in spite of the Gospel, that he was a Christian. Saints should be found who should

The Ascension of Jesus Dressed as a Priest, 1602-1605.
Opaque watercolor on paper,
16.5 x 8 cm.
Edwin Binney III Collection, San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego.

Ilya Repin, *The Resurrection of Jairus's Daughter,* 1871.
Oil on canvas, 229 x 382 cm.
Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.
(p. 160-161)







apprehend literally the sublime paradoxes of Jesus. Perfection being placed beyond the ordinary conditions of society, the complete evangelical life being possible only outside of the world, the foundation of asceticism and of the monastic state was laid. Christian societies have two codes of morality, one half-heroic for the common man, the other exalted to excess for the perfect man; and the perfect man will be the monk subjected to rules which claim to realize the Gospel ideal. It is certain that this ideal, were it only for the obligation of celibacy and poverty, could not be a common law. The monk is thus, in one sense, the only true Christian. Common sense revolts at such excesses. According to it, the impossible is the sign of weakness and of error. But common sense is a bad judge when great things are to be dealt with. To obtain anything of humanity, we must ask more. The immense moral progress due to the Gospel comes of these exaggerations. It is by reason of this that it has been, like stoicism, but with infinitely broader scope, a living argument of the divine forces which are in man, a monument erected to the power of the will.

We can easily imagine that for Jesus, at the period to which we have now arrived, everything other than the kingdom of God had absolutely disappeared. He was, if we may so speak, totally beyond nature; family, friendship, country, had no longer any meaning to him. Doubtless, he had thenceforth offered his life a sacrifice. At times, we are tempted to believe that, seeing in his own death the means of founding his kingdom, he conceived the deliberate purpose of causing himself to be killed. At other times (although this idea was not established as a dogma until somewhat later), death presents itself to him as a sacrifice, which will appease his Father and save men. A singular relish for persecution and torment seized him. His blood

Nicolas Poussin, *Christ Healing the Sick,* 1650.
Oil on canvas, 119 x 176 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



appeared to him like the water of a second baptism, in which he must be bathed and he seemed possessed by a singular haste to go forward to this baptism which alone could quench his thirst.

The grandeur of his views of nature was at times surprising. He did not conceal from himself the terrible storm which he was exciting in the world. "Suppose ye," said he, with boldness and beauty, "that I am come to bring peace on earth; I am come to send the sword. In a house of five three shall be against two and two against three. I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in law. Henceforth a man's foes shall be they of his own household." "I am come to send fire on the earth; the better if it be already kindled?" "They shall put you out of the synagogues," said he also "yea, the time cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service." "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before you. Remember the word that I said unto you, the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute commanded by the necessities of a preaching more and more exalted." Jesus was no longer free; he belonged to his mission and in one sense to humanity. At times one would have said that his reason was disturbed. He had sufferings and agitations within. The grand vision of the kingdom of God, flashing ceaselessly before his eyes, dizzied him. His disciples at certain moments believed him mad. His enemies declared him possessed. His temperament, which was excessively ardent, bore him every instant beyond the limits of human nature. His work not being a work of reason, and mocking all the classifications of the human mind, what he demanded most imperiously, was "faith". This word was that which was oftenest

Jacopo Tintoretto, *The Resurrection of Lazarus,* c. 1574.
Oil on canvas.
Private collection, Great Britain.

repeated in the little coenaculum. It is the word of all popular movements. It is clear that none of these movements would take place, if it were necessary that he who sets them on foot should gain over his disciples successively by good proofs logically deduced. Reflection leads only to doubt, and if the authors of the French Revolution, for example, had felt bound to be previously convinced by meditation for a sufficient length of time, all would have arrived at old age without doing anything. Jesus, in like manner, aimed less at logical conviction than at enthusiasm. Pressing, imperative, he endured no opposition; you must be converted; he is waiting. His natural gentleness seemed to have abandoned him; he was sometimes rude and uncouth. His disciples at times ceased to comprehend him, and experienced before him a feeling of fear. Sometimes his intolerance of all opposition led him to acts inexplicable and apparently absurd.

Not that his virtue gave way; but his struggle against the material in the name of the ideal became insupportable. He was wounded by and shrank from contact with the earth. Obstacles irritated him. His notion of the "son of God" troubled him and grew exaggerated. The fatal law which condemns the idea to sink as soon as it seeks to convert men, began to apply to him. Contact with men reduced him towards their level. The tone which he had assumed could not be sustained longer than a few months; it was time that death should come to release him from a condition strained to excess, to deliver him from the impossibilities of a way without exit, and, while rescuing him from an ordeal too much prolonged, to introduce him straightway sinless into his heavenly serenity.

Opposition to Christ

During the first period of his career, it does not seem that Jesus had met with any serious opposition. His preaching, owing to the extreme liberty which was enjoyed in Galilee and to the number of teachers who arose on all sides, had no renown beyond a rather limited circle of persons. But after Jesus had entered upon a brilliant career of prodigies and public successes, the mutterings of the storm began to be heard. More than once he was forced to hide or to flee." Antipater, however never interfered with him, although Jesus expressed himself sometimes very severely in his regard. At Tiberius, his usual residence, the Tetrarch was only four or five miles from the region chosen for the centre of his activity. He heard of his miracles, which he doubtless supposed were cunning tricks, and he desired to see some of them. The faithless were at that time very curious in such wonders. With his ordinary tact, Jesus refused. He took good care not to wander forth into an irreligious world that desired of him nothing but a vain amusement. He aspired only to gain the believers and reserved for the simple means good for them alone.

For a moment, a rumour spread that Jesus was none other than John the Baptist resuscitated from the dead. Antipater was anxious and troubled so he employed a ruse to rid his dominions of the new prophet. Some Pharisees, apparently friends of Jesus, came and told him that Antipater desired to put him to death. Jesus, notwithstanding his great simplicity, detected the snare and did not depart. His altogether peaceful ways and his repugnance to popular agitation finally reassured the Tetrarch and dissipated the danger.

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), *Daniel and Suzanne (Christ and the Adulterous Wife),* 1508-1510.
Oil on canvas, 139.2 x 181.7 cm.
Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow.

The new doctrine was far from meeting with an equally favourable reception in all the towns of Galilee. Not only did unbelieving Nazareth continue to reject him who was to be her glory; not only did his brothers persist in not believing on him, but the cities of the lake even, generally favourable, were not all converted. Jesus frequently bemoans the incredulity and hardness of heart which he encounters, and, although it is natural to manifest in such reproaches something of the exaggeration of the preacher,





although we feel in them that species of eonvicium seculi in which Jesus delighted in imitation of John the Baptist, it is clear that the country was far from flocking altogether to the kingdom of God. "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" he exclaimed, "for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven shall be brought down onto hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodora, it would have remained until this day. But I say unto you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, in the day of judgment, than for thee." "The queen of Sheba, added he, shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the outmost parts of the earth, to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, a greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nineveh shall rise up in the judgment with this generation and shall condemn it: for they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and behold a greater than Jonas is here" His wandering and precarious life, at first full of charm to him, began also to weigh upon him. "The foxes" said he have holes and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." Bitterness and reproach become more and more manifest in his heart. He accused the unbelieving of refusing to yield to the evidence, and said that, even at the moment when the Son of man should appear in his celestial glory, there would still be those who would doubt him.

Jesus indeed could not accept opposition with the coolness of the philosopher, who, understanding the reason of the diverse opinions which divide the world takes it as a matter of course that others should not be of his way of thinking.

Jesus, whose dominant quality was precisely an infinite delicacy, was led in spite of himself, to make use in polemics of the prevalent style. Like John the Baptist, he employed against his adversaries very harsh terms. Of an exquisite gentleness with the simple, he became severe in the presence of incredulity, even that which was least aggressive. He was no longer the mild teacher of the "Sermon on the Mount," who had as yet met neither resistance nor difficulty. Passion, which lay at the bottom of his character, now drew him into the most ardent invective. This singular admixture ought not to surprise us. In his beautiful book, "Paroles d'un croyant" the most unbridled anger and the gentlest reflections alternate as in a mirage. This man, who had great kindness in the conversation of life, became harsh even to madness towards those who failed to think as he did. Jesus, in the same manner, applied to himself not unjustly the passage of the book of Isaiah: "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking axe shall he not quench."

Nevertheless many of the commands which he gives to his disciples contain the germs of true fanaticism which the middle ages were to develop in a cruel way. Should he be blamed for this? A revolution is never accomplished without some rudeness. If Luther or the actors of the French Revolution had been compelled to observe the rules of politeness, the Reformation and the Revolution would not have been. Let us congratulate ourselves also that Jesus met with no law to punish outrage on any class of citizens. The Pharisees would have been inviolable. All the great things of humanity have been accomplished in the name of absolute principles. A critical philosopher would have said to his disciples: Respect the opinion of others, and believe that no one is so completely in the right that his adversary is completely in the wrong. But the action of Jesus has nothing in common with the disinterested speculation of the philosopher. To confess that one has for a moment attained the ideal, and has been checked by the malignity of others, is a thought insupportable to an ardent soul. What must it have been to the founder of a new world?

Max Beckmann, *Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery,* 1917.
Oil on canvas, 149.2 x 126.7 cm.
The Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis.

Vassily Polenov, *Christ and The Woman Taken in Adultery,* 1888.
Oil on canvas, 325 x 622 cm.
Russian Museum, St. Petersburg.
(pp. 168-169)





The invincible obstacle to the ideas of Jesus came above all from orthodox Judaism, represented by the Pharisees. Jesus was departing more and more from the ancient Law. Now, the Pharisees were the genuine Jews, the nerve and strength of Judaism. Although this party had its centre at Jerusalem, it had nevertheless its adepts either living in Galilee, or coming thither frequently. They were in general people of narrow mind, much given to outward appearances, of a scornful devotion, formal, self satisfied, and self-confident. Their manners were ridiculous, and caused a smile even in those who respected them. The nicknames which the people bestowed upon them, and which partake of caricature are proof of this. There was the "band-legged Pharisee" who walked iu the streets dragging his feet and hitting them against the stones; "the raw - headed Pharisee," who went with his eyes closed in order not to see the women, and knocked his forehead against the walls so that it was always bloody: "the drumstick Pharisee" who stood folded up like the leg of a fowl; the "heavy-shouldered Pharisee," who walked with his back bent as if he bore upon his shoulders the entire weight of the Law; the "What is there to be done? I will do it Pharisee," always on the scent for a precept to be obeyed, and finally the "painted Pharisee," to whom all the externals of devotion were only a varnish of hypocrisy. This rigorousness was, indeed, frequently only apparent, and concealed in reality great moral laxity. The people, whose instincts are always right, even when they blunder most fearfully upon the question of persons, are very easily deceived by pretended devotees. What the people love in them is good and worthy of being loved; but they have not sufficient penetration to discriminate between the appearance and the reality.

The antipathy which, in so passionate a world, must from the first have burst forth between Jesus and persons of this character, is easy to comprehend. Jesus desired nothing but the religion of the heart. That of the Pharisees consisted almost exclusively in observances. Jesus sought out the humble and the down-trodden of every sort. The Pharisees saw in that an insult to their religion of respectability. A Pharisee was an infallible and impeccable man, a pedant, sure that he was right, taking the first place in the synagogue, praying in the streets, giving alms at the sound of the trumpet, and looking about to see if he were saluted. Jesus maintained that all men should await the judgment of God with fear and humility. But the false religious direction represented by the Pharisees was far from reigning without control. Many men before Jesus, or of his time, such as Jesus the son of Sirach, one of the real ancestors of Jesus of Nazareth, Gamaliel, Antigen us of Soco, and especially the mild and noble Hillel, had taught religious doctrines far more elevated, and already almost evangelical. But these good seeds had been stifled, the beautiful proverbs of Hillel, condensing all the Law into equity, those of *Jesus the Son of Sirach*, making worship consist in the practice of good, were forgotten or anathematized. Schammai, with his narrow and exclusive spirit, had gained the victory; an enormous mass of "traditions" had stifled the Law under the pretext of caring for it and interpreting it. Undoubtedly these conservative measures had had their portion of utility. It was important that the Jewish people should love their Law, since it was this fanatical love which, by saving the religion of Moses, under Antiochus Epiphanes and under Herod, preserved the leaven whence Christianity was to arise. But taken in themselves, all these old precautions were merely puerile. The synagogue which was their depository, was now nothing more than a mother of errors. Its reign was ended, and yet to ask it to abdicate was to ask the impossible, what no established power has ever done or can do.

José Clemente Orozco, *The Epic of American Civilization: Modern Migration of the Spirit (Panel 21),*
1932-1934.
Fresco.
Hood Museum, Dartmouth College, Hanover.

The struggles of Jesus with official hypocrisy were continuous. The ordinary tactics of reformers who arise in the religious state that we have just described, and that may be called "religious formalism," is to oppose the "text" of the sacred books to the "traditions." Religious zeal is always innovating, even when it claims to be conservative in the highest degree. Just as the Neo- Catholics of our day are continually departing from the Gospel, so the Pharisees departed at every step from the Bible. This is





why the Puritan reformer usually is particularly “biblical,” starting from the immutable text to criticise the current theology which had been progressing from generation to generation. Thus did the Karaite Jews, and the Protestants at a later day. Jesus laid the axe at the root of the tree far more energetically. We saw him sometimes invoke the text against the pretended Masores or traditions of the Pharisees.

But, in general, he makes little of exegesis. It is the conscience to which be appeals. At the same blow he hews down text and commentaries. He shows clearly to the Pharisees that with their traditions they are seriously innovating upon the religion of Moses, but he by no means claims himself to return to Moses. His aim was forward, not backward. Jesus was more than the reformer of a superannuated religion; he was the creator of the eternal religion of humanity.

Disputes arose, especially in regard to a multitude of external rites introduced by tradition, and which neither Jesus nor his disciples observed. The Pharisees reproached them for it severely. When he dined with them, he scandalized them greatly by not conforming to the prescribed ablutions. “Give ye alms, said he, and all things shall become clean unto you.” What offended in the highest degree his delicate sensitiveness was the air of assurance which the Pharisees carried into religious affairs. He did not understand their contemptible devotion, which resulted in an empty search for prerogatives and titles, and in no way was there any amelioration of the heart. An admirable parable interpreted this idea with infinite charm and exactness. “One day”, he said, “two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood up and prayed thus with himself: God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.”

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other. A hatred which could be appeased only by death was the consequence of these struggles. John the Baptist had already provoked hostilities of the same kind. But the aristocrats of Jerusalem, who disdained him, had allowed the simple people to consider him a prophet. Now, the war was to the death. It was a new spirit which appeared in the world and which struck with decay all that had preceded it. John the Baptist was thoroughly a Jew; Jesus was hardly so at all. Jesus addressed himself always with the delicacy of the moral sentiment. He was a disputer only when he argued against the Pharisees, the adversary forcing him, as happens almost always to take his own tone. His exquisite irony, his arch provocations, always struck to the heart. Eternal darts, they remained fixed in the wound. The Nessus shirt of ridicule, which the Jew, son of the Pharisees, has dragged after him in tatters for these twenty centuries, was woven by Jesus with divine art. Masterpieces of lofty raillery, his traits are written in lines of fire upon the flesh of the hypocrite and the pretended devotee. Incomparable traits, traits worthy of a Son of God! Thus, a God alone can kill. Socrates and Molière but graze the skin. He carries fire and madness into the marrow of the bones.

But it was just also that this great master of irony should pay for his triumph with his life. Even in Galilee, the Pharisees employed against him this device, which was afterwards to be successful in Jerusalem. They took interest in their quarrel with the partisans of the new political order which had been established. The facilities for escape which Jesus found in Galilee, and the feebleness of the government of Antipater defeated these endeavours. He saw well that his action, if it were confined to Galilee, was necessarily limited. Judea drew him as by a charm and he would make a last attempt to gain over the rebellious city where he seemed to assume the task of justifying the proverb that a prophet might not perish out of Jerusalem.

Georges Rouault, *Ecce Homo,* 1952.
Oil on canvas, 80 x 74 cm.
Musei Vaticani, Collezione Arte Religiosa Moderna, Vatican City.



The Final Days and Death of Christ

Jesus' Last Journey to Jerusalem

For a long time Jesus had divined the dangers which surrounded him. During a period of about eighteen months, he avoided the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. At the feast of Tabernacles of the year 32 (according to the hypothesis which we have adopted), his relatives, still indisposed and incredulous, induced him to go thither. The evangelist John seems to insinuate that there was in this invitation some concealed project to destroy him. "Show thyself to the world," said they; "these things are not done in secret. Go into Judea, that men may see the works that thou doest." Jesus, suspecting some treachery, at first refused. Afterwards, when the caravan of pilgrims was gone, he began the journey unknown to all, and almost alone. This was his last farewell to Galilee. The feast of Tabernacles fell upon the autumnal equinox. Six months were yet to roll away before the fatal end. But during this interval Jesus did not see again his dear provinces of the North. The grateful days were passed and he then tread step by step the painful path which shall end in the agonies of death.

His disciples and the pious women who waited on him met him in Judea. But to him everything had changed! Jesus was a stranger in Jerusalem. He felt that there was here a wall of resistance thathe could not penetrate. Surrounded by snares and objections, he was incessantly pursued by the ill-will of the Pharisees. Instead of this unlimited facility of faith, the happy gift of young natures, which he found in Galilee, instead of these wild and gentle people to whom objection (which is always the fruit of some little malevolence and indocility) found no access, he encountered here at every step an obstinate incredulity, upon which the means of action which had succeeded produced little effect. His disciples, being Galileans, were despised. Nicodemus, who had on one of his previous journeys had an interview with him by night, almost compromised himself with the Sanhedrin for attempting to defend him. "What! art thou also a Galilean ?" they asked; "search the Scriptures; can a prophet come out of Galilee?"

The city, as we have already said, was unpleasant unto Jesus. Thus far, he had always avoided the great centers, preferring for his field of action the country and towns of small importance. Many of the precepts which he gave the apostles were absolutely inapplicable outside of a simple society of humble people. Having no idea of the world, accustomed to his friendly Galilean communism, naiveties were constantly escaping him, which at Jerusalem might appear singular. His imagination, his taste for nature found itself constrained within these walls. The true religion was not to spring from the tumult of cities, but from the tranquil serenity of the fields.

The arrogance of the priests rendered the steps of the temple distasteful to him. One day, some of his disciples, who knew Jerusalem better than he, wished to attract his attention to the beauty of the

Christ Detached from the Cross,
also known as the *Courajod Christ,*
12th century.
Wood with polychromic traces,
155 x 168 x 30 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.

buildings of the temple, the admirable selection of materials, and the votive offerings which covered the walls: "See ye all these things," said he; "Truly I say unto you, there shall not be left here one stone upon another." He refused to admire anything except a poor widow who was passing at that moment, and threw into the treasury a small coin. "She has given more than they all," he said; "the others have given out of their abundance; she, of her want." This manner of critically regarding all that was done at Jerusalem, of exalting the poor who gave little, and abusing the rich who gave much, of blaming the opulent clergy who did nothing for the good of the people, naturally exasperated the priestly caste. The seat of a conservative aristocracy, the temple was the last place in the world in which the revolution could succeed. Here was, however, the centre of Jewish life, the point at which ho must conquer or die. Upon this Calvary, where certainly Jesus suffered more than at Golgotha, his days rolled by in dispute and in acrimony, in wearisome controversies concerning canonical law and exegesis, in which his great moral elevation secured him little advantage, nay, rather gave him a species of inferiority.

In the midst of this troubled life, the kindly and sensitive heart of Jesus succeeded in creating for itself an asylum in which he had much sweet enjoyment. After passing the day in the disputes of the temple, Jesus descended in evening into the valley of Kidron, took a rest in the orchard of a farming establishment (probably for the manufacture of oil) named Gethsemane which served as a pleasure-garden for the inhabitants. He went on to pass the night upon the Mount of Olives, which bounds the horizon of the city on the east. This side is the only one which, in the environs of Jerusalem, presents an aspect in any degree verdant and cheerful. Olive, fig and palm tree plantations were numerous and gave their names to the villages, farms or enclosures of Bethpage, Gethsemane, and Bethany. There were upon the Mount of Olives two great cedars, the memory of which was long preserved among the exiled Jews. Their branches served as an asylum for clouds of doves, and under their shade little bazaars were established. This whole suburb was to a certain extent the quarter of Jesus and his disciples; they seem to have known it field by field and house by house.

The village of Bethany, in particular, was situated at the summit of the hill, upon the slope towards the Dead Sea and the Jordan, ten kilometres from Jerusalem. This was the favourite resting-place of Jesus. He there made the acquaintance of a family of three persons; two sisters and a brother, whose friendship was very dear to him. Of the two sisters, one, named Martha, was an obliging, kind and eager person. The other, on the contrary, named Mary, pleased Jesus with her languor, and by her largely developed speculative instincts. Often seated at the feet of Jesus, she forgot to attend to the duties of material life. Her sister, at such times, upon whom fell all the labour, complained gently: "Martha, Martha", said Jesus unto her, "thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her." The brother, Eleazer, or Lazarus was also much beloved by Jesus. Finally, a certain Simon the Leper, who was the owner of the house, constituted, it appears, a part of the family. It was there, in the embrace of a pious friendship that Jesus forgot the disgusts of public life. In this tranquil household he found consolation from the annoyances which the Pharisees and the Scribes never ceased to excite against him. He often seated himself upon the Mount of Olives, opposite Mount Moriah fixed his eyes upon the splendid perspective of the terraces of the temple and its roofs covered with sparkling metallic plates. This prospect inspired strangers with admiration and at sunrise especially, the sacred mountain dazzled the eyes and appeared like a mass of snow and gold. But a deep feeling of sadness embittered to Jesus the spectacle which filled all other Israelites with joy and pride. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem,

Fra Angelico, *Christ Entering Jerusalem* (one of 35 paintings for the Silver Treasury of Santissima Annunziata), c. 1450.
Tempera on wood panel, 39 x 39.
Museo di San Marco, Florence.


CCE REX TVVS VENIT TIBI MANSVETVS SEDES SVP ASINA 7FILIV SVBIVGAL'. ÇACHARI .IX.
OSANNA FILIO DAVID BENEDICTVS QVI VENIT IN NOMINE DOMINI. MACTEI. XXI.



thou that kills the prophets, and stones them which are sent unto thee," exclaimed he at such bitter moments, "how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

Not that many good souls, here as well as in Galilee, were not touched, but such was the weight of the dominant orthodoxy that very few dared confess it. Men feared to discredit themselves in the eyes of the Hierosolymites by joining the school of a Galilean. They would have risked being driven out of the synagogue, which in a mean and bigoted society was the greatest possible affront. Excommunication, moreover, entailed the confiscation of property. By ceasing to be a Jew a man did not become a Roman. He was left without defence against the power of a theocratic legislation of the most atrocious severity. One day, the officers of the temple, who had attended one of the discourses of Jesus and had been enchanted with it, came to confide their doubts to the priest: "Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed in him," was the reply: "this people who knows not the Law, are cursed." Jesus remained thus at Jerusalem, a countryman admired by countrymen like himself, but repelled by all the aristocracy of the nation. The leaders of schools and sects were too numerous for the appearance of another to create much excitement. His voice gained little attention in Jerusalem. Prejudices of race and sect, the direct enemies of the spirit of the gospel, were too deeply rooted there.

His teaching, in this new world, out of necessity became greatly modified. His beautiful sermons, which were always calculated to affect the young imagination and the moral purity of the conscience of his auditors, here fell upon stone. He himself, so at ease on the shore of his charming little lake, was constrained and thrown out of his proper element in the presence of pedants. His perpetual affirmations concerning himself began to be somewhat wearisome. He was obliged to make himself a controversialist, a jurist, an expounder, and a theologian. His conversations, ordinarily full of grace, became a running fire of dispute and an interminable succession of scholastic battles. His harmonious genius was extenuated in insipid argumentations upon the Law and the prophets, in which we would sometimes prefer not to see him act the part of the aggressor. He lends himself to the captious inquiries which quibblers without tact force upon him. In general, he extricated himself from embarrassment with great address. His reasoning, it is true, was often subtle (simplicity of mind and subtlety touch each other; when the simple man would reason, he was always a little sophisticated); we can see that sometimes he seeks misunderstandings and purposely prolongs them; his reason, judged by the rules of Aristotelean logic, was very weak. But when the peerless charm of his spirit could manifest itself, he was triumphant. One day some one thought to embarrass him by presenting an adulterous woman and asking him how she should be treated. We know the admirable reply of Jesus. The acute raillery of a man unhampered by the world, tempered by a divine goodness, could find expression in no more exquisite manner. But the wit which is allied to moral grandeur is that which fools can least pardon. When he pronounced these words of a discernment so just and so pure, "He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone," Jesus pierced hypocrisy to the heart, and at the same moment signed his own death warrant.

It is probable, indeed, that without the exasperation caused by so many bitter retorts, Jesus may have remained unknown, and have been lost in the terrible tempest which was soon to overwhelm the whole Jewish nation. The high priests and the Sadducees felt for him contempt rather than hatred. The great priestly families, the Boethusim and the family of Ilanan were fanatical in nothing but repose. The Sadducees, like Jesus, repelled the "traditions "of the Pharisees. By a very strange

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn,
Christ Driving the Money-Changers from the Temple, 1634.
Oil on wood, 43.1 x 32 cm.
The Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

Masaccio (Tommaso Cassai),
The Tribute Money, c. 1428.
Fresco, 255 x 598 cm.
Brancacci Chapel, Santa Maria della Carmine, Florence.





singularity, it was these unbelievers, denying the resurrection, the oral law, and the existence of angels, who were the genuine Jews, or, to speak more properly, the ancient law in its simplicity no longer satisfied the religious needs of the time. Those who held strictly to it and rejected the modern inventions seemed impious to the devotees, At all events, it was not from such a party that a very severe reaction against Jesus could come. The official priesthood, looking towards the political power and ultimately allied with it, comprehended nothing of these enthusiastic movements. It was the Pharisaic bourgeoisie, the innumerable scribes living by the knowledge of the "traditions," who took alarm, and who were in reality menaced in their prejudices and their interests by the teaching of the new master.

One of the most constant efforts of the Pharisees was to draw Jesus into the arena of political questions and to compromise him with the party of Judah the Gaulonite. Their tactics were skilful, because it required the profound ingenuity of Jesus never to have become embroiled with the Roman authority, notwithstanding his proclamation of the kingdom of God. They wished to tear away this ambiguity, and to compel him to explain. One day, a group of Pharisees of the political order called "Herodians," approached him, and under the appearance of pious zeal: "Master", they asked, "we know that thou art true, and teach the way of God in truth, neither care thou for any man; for thou regard not the person of men. Tell us therefore, what think thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Csesar, or not?" They hoped for an answer which would give a pretext for delivering him to Pilate. That of Jesus was admirable. He caused the image upon the current coin to be shown to him. "Render", said he, "unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." Deep words which decided the future of Christianity! Words of perfect spirituality and a marvellous justness, which founded the separation of the spiritual from the temporal, and established the foundation of true liberalism and of true civilization!

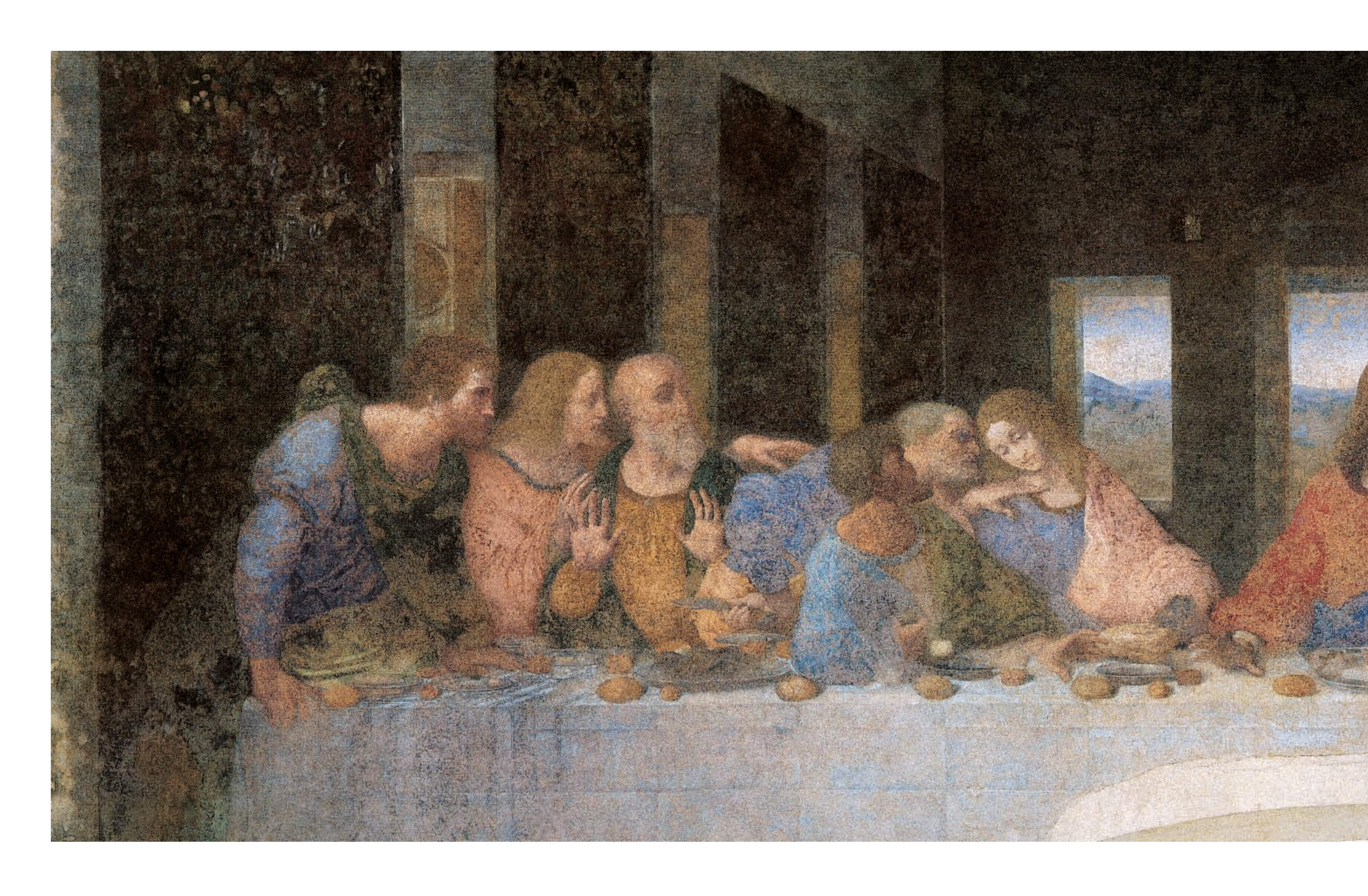
His gentle and penetrating genius inspired him when he was alone among his disciples, with accents full of charm: "Truly, truly, I say unto you, He that enters not by the door into the sheepfold is a robber. But he that enters in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. The sheep hears his voice, and he calls them out, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. The thief comes not but to steal and to kill and to destroy. The hireling, whose own the sheep are not, see the wolf coming, and leave the sheep, and flee. But I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine; and I lay down my life for my sheep." The idea of a speedy solution of the crisis of humanity comes before him: "When the branch of the fig-tree", he said, "is yet tender, and puts forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh. Lift up your eyes and look upon the world; it is white for the harvest."

His vigorous eloquence was always exhibited when he was called to combat hypocrisy. "The scribes and Pharisees sat in Moses' seat, therefore, whatsoever they bid you observe and do, but do not ye after their works; for they say and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

"But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, "Master! Woe unto them!"

Christ on the Cold Stone, c. 1500.
Carved limestone with traces of polychromy, 98 x 49.5 x 48.5 cm.
Museum Catharijneconvent, Utrecht.



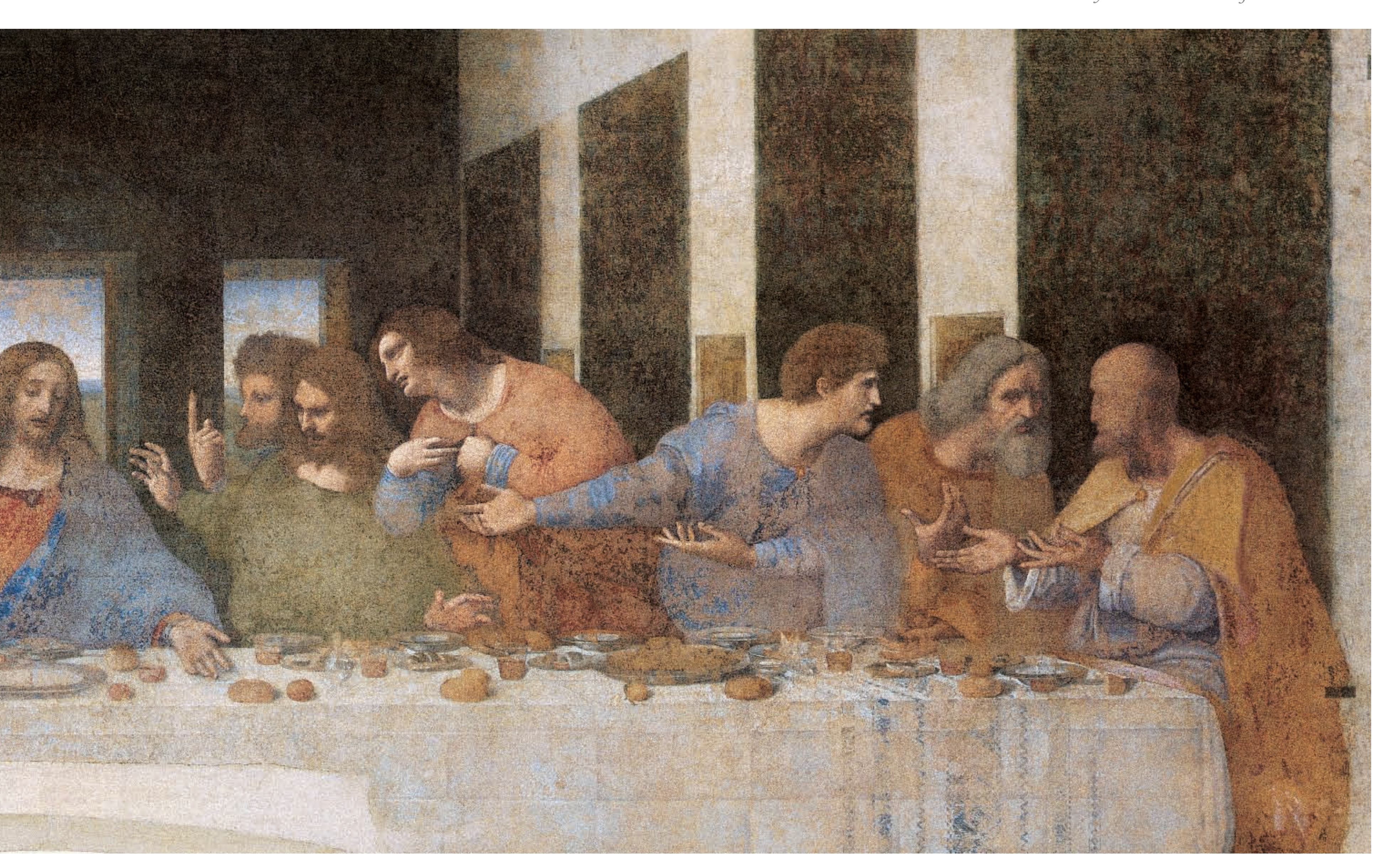


“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! who have taken the key of knowledge and use it only to shut up the kingdom of heaven against men. Ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of Hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, for you are as graves which appear not, and over which men walk unawares!”

“Ye fools and blind who pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. Blind guides, who strain your wine for a gnat, and swallow a camel, woe unto you!”

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and of excess. Blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within; then may thou look to the cleanliness of that which is without.”

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto white sepulchres,! which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”

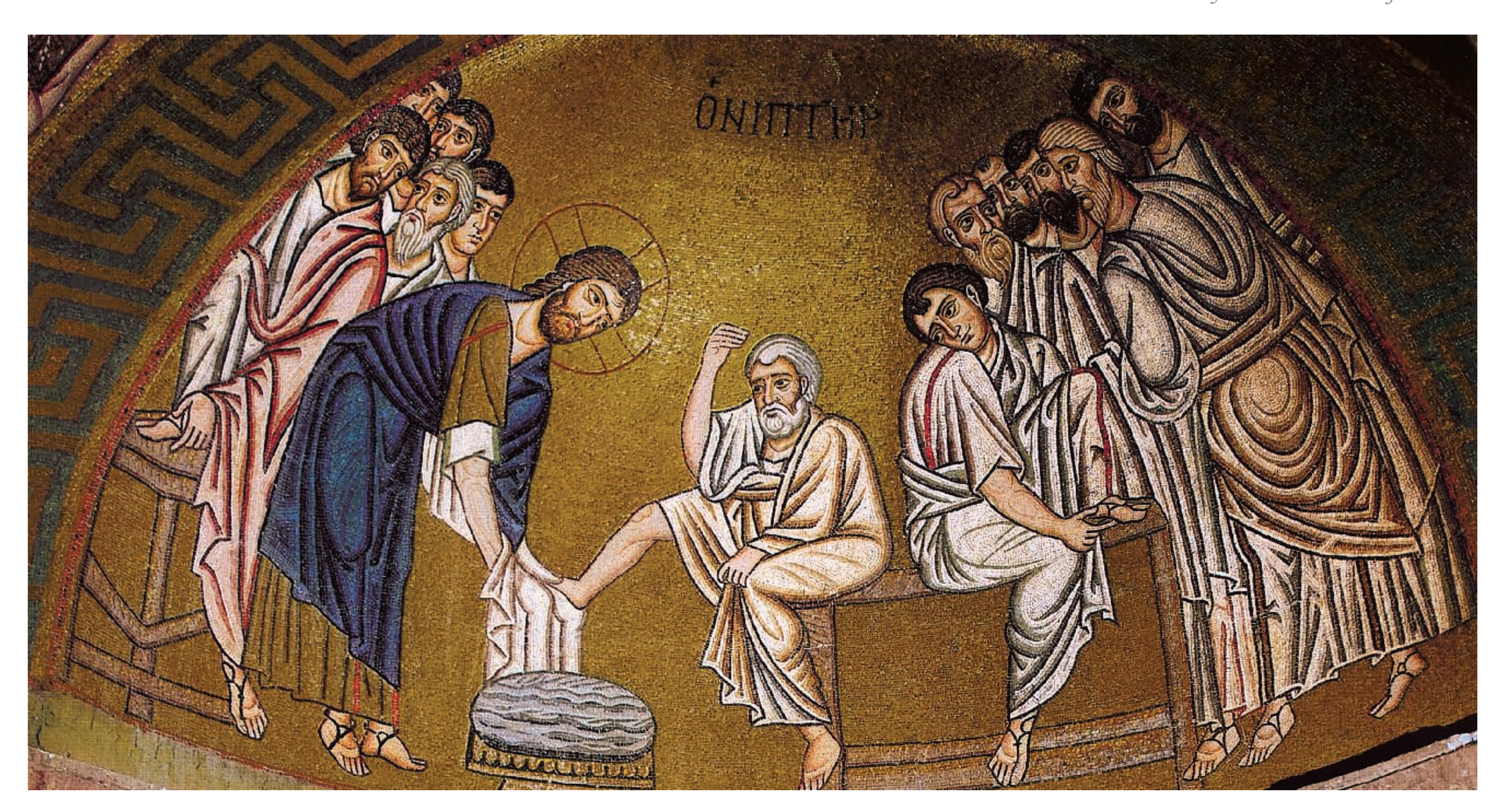


"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, if we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore, ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them that killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. Therefore also said the Wisdom of God. I will send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city: that upon yon may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar. Yerily I say unto you. It shall be required of this generation."

His terrible dogma of the substitution of the Gentiles, this idea that the kingdom of God was to be transferred to others, those for whom it was destined not having desired it came like a bloody menace before the aristocracy. His title of Son of God, which he openly avowed in vivid parables, in which his enemies played the part of murderers of the heavenly messengers, was a defiance to legend. The bold appeal which he addressed to the poor was yet more seditious. He declared that he had come to open the eyes of the blind, and to make blind those who thought they saw. One day, his harshness towards the temple drew from him imprudent words: "This temple, made with hands", he said, "I can, if I will,

Leonardo da Vinci, *The Last Supper,* 1495-1498.
Tempera on gesso, pitch, and mastic, 460 x 880 cm.
Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, Milan.





destroy it, and in three days I will rebuild of it another, not made with hands." We know not well what sense Jesus attached to these words, in which his disciples endeavoured to discover these far-fetched allegories. But as a pretext only was desired, this expression was eagerly caught up. It will figure among the reasons for the sentence of Jesus to death, and will fall again upon his ear in the last agonies of Golgotha. These irritating discussions always ended in storms. The Pharisees cast stones at him, in which they only executed an article of the Law, ordering them to stone without a hearing every prophet, even a miracle worker, who should turn away the people from their ancient worship. At other times, they called him mad, possessed, a Samaritan, or sought even to kill him. They took note of his words to invoke against him the laws of an intolerant theocracy, which the Roman domination had not yet abrogated.

The Last Week of Jesus' Life

He set out, in fact, with his disciples, to visit for the last time the unbelieving city. The hopes of his followers became more and more exalted. All believed, in going up to Jerusalem, that the kingdom of God was there to be manifested. The impiety of men being at its acme was a mighty sign that the consummation was near. Their conviction of this was such that they already disputed with each other the precedence in the kingdom. This was, the moment which Salome chose to ask for her sons the seats on the right and on the left of the Son of man. The master, on the contrary, was occupied with grave thoughts. Sometimes he suffered to escape a gloomy feeling of resentment towards his enemies. He told the parable of a nobleman, who goes into a far country to receive a kingdom and to return; but just as has he departed his citizens would have him no more. The king returns, orders before him those who have desired that he should not reign over them, and commanded them all to be put to death.

Ford Madox Brown, *Jesus Washing Peter's Feet,* 1852-1856.
Oil on canvas, 116.8 x 133.3 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.

The Washing of the Feet, 1100.
Mosaic.
Hosios Loukas, Mount Helicon.

At other times he rudely destroyed the illusions of his disciples. As they were travelling over the rocky roads north of Jerusalem, Jesus walked thoughtfully at the head of the group of his companions. All looked upon him in silence, with a sentiment of awe, not daring to question him. Already, on various occasions, he had spoken to them of his future sufferings, and they had listened unwillingly. Jesus finally broke the silence, and, no longer concealing his presentiments, he spoke to them openly of his approaching end. There was great sadness in all the company. The disciples were expecting soon to see the sign appear in the clouds. The inaugural cry of the "kingdom of God" "Blessed be he who cometh in the name of the Lord," already rang through the through in joyous accents. This bloody perspective disturbed them. At each step of the fatal journey, the kingdom of God drew near or fled away in the mirage of their dreams. As for him, he became at peace in the thought that he was about to die, but that this death would save the world, the misunderstanding between him and his disciples widened every moment.

It was the custom to come up to Jerusalem some days before the Passover. In order to prepare for it, Jesus arrived after the rest, and for a moment his enemies thought themselves frustrated in their hope of seizing him. On the sixth day before the feast (Saturday the 8th of Nisan, March 28th), he finally arrived at Bethany. He stopped, as was his custom, at the house of Lazarus, Martha and Mary, or that of Simon the Leper. They gave him a grand reception. There was at the house of Simon the Leper a dinner where a large number of persons were assembled, attracted by the desire to see him, and also to see Lazarus, of whom so many things had been related for some days past. Lazarus was seated at a table and attracted the attention of all. Martha served according to her custom. It seems as though they sought, by an increase of the external manifestations of respect, to overcome the coldness of the public and to signalize decidedly the high dignity of the guest whom they were entertaining. Mary, in order to give the dinner a more festive appearance, entered during the dinner, bearing a vase of perfume, which she poured upon the feet of Jesus. Then she broke the vase, according to an ancient usage which was to destroy the vessels used in serving a stranger of distinction. Finally, carrying the manifestations of her worship to extremes hitherto unknown, she prostrated herself and wiped the feet of her master with her long hair. The whole house was filled with the pleasant odour of the perfume, to the great joy of all, except the avaricious Judas Iscariot. Considering the economical habits of the community, it really was prodigality. The greedy treasurer calculated at once for how much the perfume might have been sold, and what it would have produced for the poor. This sentiment devoid of affection, which seemed to place something else above himself, was displeasing to Jesus. He was fond of honour; for honour served his purpose and established his title as the Son of David. So when they spoke to him of the poor, he replied rather sharply: "the poor ye have always with you, but me ye have not always." And rising to exaltation, he promised immortality to the woman who at this critical moment gave him a pledge of love.

The next day (Sunday, the 9th of Nisan), Jesus went down from Bethany to Jerusalem. When, at a turn of the road, upon the summit of the Mount of Olives, he saw the city spread out before him, it is said that he wept over it and addressed to it a last appeal. At the foot of the mountain, not far from the gate, entering upon the belt of land near the eastern wall of the city, which was called Bethphage, doubtless from the fig trees with which it was planted, he had yet another moment of human satisfaction. The news of his arrival had spread abroad. The Galileans who had come to the feast were rejoiced, and prepared him a modest triumph. They brought him a female donkey, followed, as usual, by her colt. The Galileans spread their finest garments in the way of housings

Salvador Dalí, *The Sacrament of the Last Supper,* 1955.
Oil on canvas, 166.7 x 267 cm.
National Gallery of Art, Washington, D. C.





upon this poor beast, and made him sit thereon. Others, moreover, spread their clothes along the road, and strewed it with green palm leaves. The multitude that went before and that followed bearing palms, cried: "Hosanna to the son of David. Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" Some people even went so far as to give him the title of "king of Israel" and "Rabbi, make them hold their peace," said the Pharisees to him. "If they should hold their peace, the stones would cry out," replied Jesus, and he entered the city. The Hierosolymites, who scarcely knew him, asked who he was: "This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth and Galilee," was the reply. Jerusalem was a city of about fifty thousand souls. A little event, like the entrance of a famous stranger, or the arrival of a band of provincials, or a movement of the people in the avenues of the town, could not fail, under ordinary circumstances, to be soon talked about. But at the time of the feasts, there was extreme confusion. Jerusalem, on those days, belonged to strangers. It was, therefore, among them that the commotion appears to have been greatest. Some proselytes who spoke Greek and who had come to the feast, became curious, and desired to see Jesus. They asked his disciple and it is not known what resulted from this conversation. As for Jesus, he went, according to his custom, to pass the night in his dear village of Bethany. The three following days (Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday), he went down in the same manner to Jerusalem and after sunset he returned either to Bethany or to the farms on the western slope of the Mount of Olives, where he had many friends.

A deep sadness appears, during these last days, which filled the soul of Jesus that is ordinarily so cheerful and so serene. All the recitals agree, in attributing to him, before his arrest, a moment of hesitation and of trouble, a kind of anticipated death-agony. According to some, he cried out suddenly: "Father, save me from this hour. "fIt was believed that at that moment, a voice was heard from heaven; others said that an angel came to console him. According to a widespread version, this took place in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus, it is said, withdrew a stone's throw from his sleeping disciples, taking with him only Cephas and the two sons of Zebedee. Then he prayed with his face to the ground. His soul was sad unto death and a terrible anguish weighed upon him but resignation to the divine will triumphed. This scene, by virtue of that instinctive art which presided over the compilations of the synoptic, and which often makes them obedient to considerations of propriety or effect in the arrangements of events has been assigned to the last night of Jesus, and to the moment of his arrest. Were this the true version, we could hardly understand how John, who must have been the intimate witness of so moving an episode, should not have spoken of it in his very circumstantial account of the evening of Thursday. All that can be said is, that during his last days, the immense burden of the mission he had accepted weighed cruelly upon Jesus. Human nature awoke for a moment. He began perhaps to doubt of his work. Terror, hesitation seized upon him and threw him into a dejection worse than death. The man who has sacrificed and the natural compensations of life to a great idea, experiences a moment of sad reflection when the image of death presents itself to him for the first time and seeks to persuade him that all is vanity. Perhaps some one of those touching recollections which even the strongest souls preserve, and which at times pierce them like the sword, came to him at this moment. Did he recall the clear fountains of Galilee where he might have refreshed himself; the vineyard and fig-tree under which he might have been seated; the young maidens who might perhaps have consented to love him? Did he curse his bitter destiny, which had forbidden to him the joys conceded to all others? Did he regret his too good nature, and, the victim of his own grandeur, did he weep because he had not remained a simple artisan of Nazareth? For all these interior agitations were evidently a sealed book to his disciples. They understood nothing, and supplied by artless conjectures

Giotto di Bondone, *The Betrayal of Christ,* c. 1305.
Fresco, 185 x 200 cm.
Cappella Scrovegni, Padua.

whatever was obscure to them in the great soul of their master. It is certain, at least, that his divine nature soon resumed the ascendancy. He might still have avoided death. The love of his work gained the victory. He accepted the draught of the cup even unto the lees. From this time, indeed, Jesus is again complete and without a cloud. The subtleties of the polemic, the credulity of the thaumaturgist and the exorcist are forgotten. Nothing remains but the incomparable hero of the Passion, the founder of the rights of free conscience, the perfect model upon which all suffering souls shall meditate for strength and consolation.

The triumph of Bethphage, this audacity of provincials celebrating the advent of their King-Messiah at the gates of Jerusalem, completed the exasperation of the Pharisees and the aristocracy of the temple. A new council was held on Wednesday (the 12th of Nisan,). The immediate arrest of Jesus was resolved upon. A great regard for order and for a conservative policy controlled all their measures. The difficulty was to avoid scandal. As the feast of the Passover, which began that year on Friday, was a time of confusion and excitement, it was resolved to anticipate those days. Jesus was popular if a mob was apprehended. The arrest was therefore fixed for Thursday, the next day. It was determined also not to seize him in the temple, where he came every day, but to spy out his habits, in order to seize him in some secret place. The officers of the priests sounded the disciples, hoping to obtain the needful information through their weakness or through their simplicity. They found what they sought in Judas Iscariot from motives impossible to explain, who betrayed his Master, gave all the necessary indications, and even took upon himself (although such an excess of perfidy is hardly credible) to conduct the squad which was to make the arrest. The memory of horror which the folly or the wickedness of this man left to the Christian tradition, must have led to some exaggeration in this. Judas, the title of apostle, had performed miracles, and cast out demons. Legend, which loves strong colours, could only admit into the eleven saints and one reprobate. Reality does not proceed with such absolute discriminations. Avarice, which the synoptic gospels give as the motive for the crime in question, is not sufficient to explain it. It would be strange that the man who kept the purse, and who knew what he would lose by the death of the chief, should exchange the profits of his occupation for a very trifling sum of money. Might not Judas have been wounded in his self-love by the reproof which he received at the dinner at Bethany? Yet this is not enough. John would make him a thief and an unbeliever from the beginning, a view which is entirely improbable. We prefer to believe in some feeling of jealousy, some interior dissension. The peculiar hatred which John exhibits towards Judas confirms this hypothesis. Of a heart less pure than the rest, Judas may have assumed unconsciously the narrow sentiments of his office. By a mutation not uncommon in active life, he may have come to set the interests of the treasury above the very work it was intended to serve. The administrator may have killed the apostle. The murmur which escaped him at Bethany seems to indicate that at times he thought the master cost his spiritual family too dear. Undoubtedly this mean economy had caused other collisions in the little society.

Without denying that Judas Iscariot may have contributed to the arrest of his master, we think, therefore, that the maledictions with which he is loaded are in some degree unjust. His act was perhaps more a blunder than a crime. The conscience of the practical man is lively and just, but unstable and illogical. It cannot resist a sudden impulse. The secret societies of the republican party contained much earnestness and sincerity, and yet informers were very numerous among them. A slight offence was enough to make a member a traitor. But if the foolish desire for a few pieces of silver turned the head

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio,
The Kiss of Judas, 1603.
Oil on canvas, 133.5 x 169.5 cm.
National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin.

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio),
Christ Shown to the People (Ecce Homo),
c. 1570-76.
Oil on canvas, 109.2 x 94.8 cm.
Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis. (p. 194)

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn,
Ecce Homo, 1634.
Oil on paper glued to canvas,
54.5 x 44.5 cm.
The National Gallery, London. (p. 195)









of poor Judas, it does not seem that he lost his moral sense entirely, since seeing the consequences of his fault, he repented, and, it is said, killed himself.

Each moment, at this period, becomes awful, and has counted more than whole centuries in the history of humanity. We have reached Thursday, the 13th of Nisan, (April 2d.) On the evening of the next day the feast of the Passover began by the eating of the Paschal lamb. The feast continued through the seven following days, during which the unleavened bread was eaten. The first and the last of these seven days had a peculiar sanctity. The disciples were already occupied with preparations for the feast. As for Jesus, we are led to believe that he knew the treachery of Judas, and that he suspected the fate which awaited him. In the evening he took his last supper with his disciples. It was not the ritual feast of the Passover, as was afterwards supposed by a mistake of one day, but to the old Church the supper of Thursday was the true Passover, the seal of the new covenant. All the disciples referred to it their dearest memories, and a multitude of touching incidents which each retained of the master were accumulated upon this feast, which became the corner-stone of Christian piety, and the starting-point of the most fruitful institutions.

There is no doubt, indeed, that the tender love with which the heart of Jesus was filled for the little church that surrounded him, overflowed at this hour. His serene and mighty soul was yet light beneath the weight of the gloomy thoughts which beset him. He had a word for each one of his friends. Two among them, John and Peter, were the special objects of tender marks of attachment. John (at least he affirms so) lay upon the divan by the side of Jesus, and his head reposed upon the breast of the master. Towards the end of the meal the secret which weighed upon Jesus' heart almost escaped him: "Verily, said he, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me." This was to those simple men a moment of anguish; they looked at one another, and each questioned himself. Judas was present; perhaps Jesus, who for some time had had reason to distrust him, sought by this saying to draw from his looks, or his embarrassment, a confession of his fault. But the unfaithful disciple did not lose his presence of mind.

In the meantime, the upright and virtuous soul of Peter was upon the rack. He made a sign to John to endeavor to learn of whom the master spoke. John, who could converse with Jesus without being heard, asked him the solution of this enigma. Jesus having nothing more than suspicions, would pronounce no name; he told John merely to notice to whom he should give the bread he was dipping. At the same time, he dipped the bread and offered it to Judas. John and Peter alone understood this. Jesus addressed to Judas a few words which contained a bitter reproach, but were not comprehended by the rest. It was supposed that Jesus was giving him orders for the feast of the morrow, and he went out.

At the time, this supper seemed remarkable to no one, and apart from the apprehensions which the master imparted to his disciples, who but half understood him, nothing extraordinary occurred. Bat after the death of Jesus, a signification singularly solemn was attached to this evening, and the imagination of believers spread over it a hue of soft mysticism. What we remember best of a dear friend is his last days. By an inevitable illusion, we lend to the conversations that we then had with him a meaning which they have received only from death; we gather into a few hours the memories of many years. Most of the disciples never saw their master after the supper of which we have spoken. It was the farewell banquet. At this repast, as well as at many others, Jesus practised his mysterious

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio,
The Flagellation, 1607.
Oil on canvas, 286 x 213 cm.
Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte,
Naples.

rite of the breaking of bread. As it was believed at an early period that this supper took place on the day of the Passover, and was the Paschal feast, the idea naturally resulted that the Eucharist was instituted at this supreme hour. Starting from the hypothesis that Jesus knew before and the precise moment of his death, the disciples must have been led to suppose that he reserved for his last hours a multitude of important acts. Moreover, as one of the fundamental ideas of the first Christians was that the death of Jesus was a sacrifice, replacing all those of the ancient Law, the "Last Supper," which they supposed to have taken place once for all on the evening before the Crucifixion, became the great sacrifice, the act of foundation of the new covenant, the sign of the blood shed for the salvation of all. The bread and the wine, taken in connection with the death itself, were thus the image of the new Testament which Jesus had sealed with his sufferings, the commemoration of the sacrifice of the Christ until his coming.

At a very early day this mystery was fixed in a brief story of the sacrament, which we possess under four quite similar forms. John, so prepossessed with Eucharistic ideas, who narrates the last supper with much prolixity, who attaches to it so many circumstances and so much discourse. John, who alone among the evangelical narrators, has here the credibility of an eyewitness, knows nothing of this story. This is proof that he did not regard the institution of the Eucharist as a peculiarity of the Last Supper. To him, the rite of the Last Supper is the washing of feet. It is probable that in certain primitive Christian families, this latter rite obtained an importance which it subsequently lost. Undoubtedly Jesus, under certain circumstances, had practised it in order to give his disciples a lesson of humility. It was referred to the eve of his death, in consequence of the tendency to group around the Last Supper all the grand moral and ritual commands of Jesus.

A lofty sentiment of love, concord, charity and mutual deference animated, moreover, the memories which they thought to preserve of the last hours of Jesus. The unity of his Church it is, constituted by himself or by his spirit, which is always the soul of the symbols and the discourses that Christian tradition refers to this sacred hour: "A new commandment I give unto you," said he, "that ye love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. I call you not servants; for the servant know not what his lord doeth: but I call yon my friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you. This I command you that ye love one another." At this last hour, there were still some rivalries, some struggles for precedence! Jesus remarked that if he, the master, had been among his disciples as their servant, how much the more ought they to submit themselves one to another. According to some, while drinking the wine, he said: "I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." According to others, he promised them very soon a heavenly feast at which they should be seated upon thrones by his side.

It seems that towards the end of the evening the presentiments of Jesus took possession of his disciples. All felt that a serious danger menaced the master and that a crisis was at hand. For a moment Jesus thought of taking precautions and spoke of swords. There were two in the company. "It is enough," said he. He did not follow that idea; he saw plainly that timid provincials would not hold out before the armed force of the great powers of Jerusalem. Cephas, full of courage and feeling sure of himself, swore that he would go with him to prison or to death. Jesus, with his usual penetration, expressed some doubts. According to one tradition, which came probably from Paul himself, Jesus referred him to the crowing of the cock. All, like Cephas, swore that they would not deny him.

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio),
Christ Crowned with Thorns, c. 1570.
Oil on canvas, 280 x 182 cm.
Alte Pinakothek, Bayerische
Staatsgemäldesammlungen, Munich.





The Arrest and Trial of Jesus

Night had completely fallen when they left the room. Jesus, according to his habit, crossed the valley of the Kidron, and repaired accompanied by his disciples, to the garden of Gethsemane, at the foot of the Mount of Olives. Predominating over his friends by his immense superiority, he watched and prayed. They were sleeping beside him, when suddenly a band of men presented themselves by the light of their torches. They were sergeants of the temple, armed with clubs, a species of police which had been left to the priests; they were supported by a detachment of Roman soldiers with their swords; the order of arrest emanated from the high-priest and the Sanhedrin. Judas, knowing the habits of Jesus, had indicated this place as that in which they might most easily surprise him. Judas, according to the unanimous tradition of the primitive times was so detestable as to make a kiss the sign of his treachery. However this may be, it is certain that the disciples made a beginning of resistance. One of them (Peter, according to the eyewitnesses) drew his sword and wounded one of the servants of the high-priest, named Malek, in the ear. Jesus checked this first impulse. He gave himself up to the soldiers. Weak and incapable of acting with success, especially against authorities which had so great prestige, the disciples took to flight and dispersed. Peter and John kept within sight of their master. Another unknown young man followed him, dressed in a thin garment. An attempt was made to arrest him; but the young man fled, leaving his tunic in the hands of the officers.

The course which the priests had resolved to follow against Jesus was strictly conformable to the established law. The procedure against the "seducer" who seeks to sully the purity of the faith, is laid down in the Talmud with details the shameless simplicity of which causes a smile. In it judicial ambuscade is constituted an essential portion of the criminal process. When a man is accused of "seduction," two witnesses are concealed behind a partition; and it is arranged to bring the accused into an adjoining room, in which he can be heard by the two witnesses without knowing himself. Two candles are lit near him, that it may be fully established that the witnesses "see him." Then he is made to repeat his blasphemy. He is urged to retract.

If the lie persists, the witnesses who have heard him bring him to the tribunal and he is stoned. The Talmud adds that this course was adopted in the proceeding against Jesus, that he was condemned upon the testimony of two witnesses who had been concealed, that "seduction" is, moreover, the only crime for which witnesses are thus prepared.

The disciples of Jesus apprise us, indeed, that the crime charged against their master was "seduction," and, with the exception of certain minutiae, the fruit of the rabbinical imagination, the narrative of the evangelists corresponds word for word to the proceeding described by the Talmud. The plan of the enemies of Jesus was to convict him, by examination of witnesses and by his own confessions, of blasphemy and of an outrage upon the Mosaic religion, to condemn him to death according to the law, and then to make Pilate approve the sentence. The sacerdotal authority, as we have already seen, resided in fact entirely in the hands of Hanan. The order of arrest came probably from him. To the house of this powerful personage Jesus was first taken and Hanan questioned him as to his doctrines and his disciples. Jesus refused with a just pride to enter into long explanations. He referred them to his teaching, which had been public; he declared that he had never had any secret doctrine and he invited the ex-high-priest to question those who had heard him. This response was perfectly natural, but the exaggerated respect with which the aged pontiff was surrounded made it seem audacious one of the bystanders replied, it is said with a cuff.

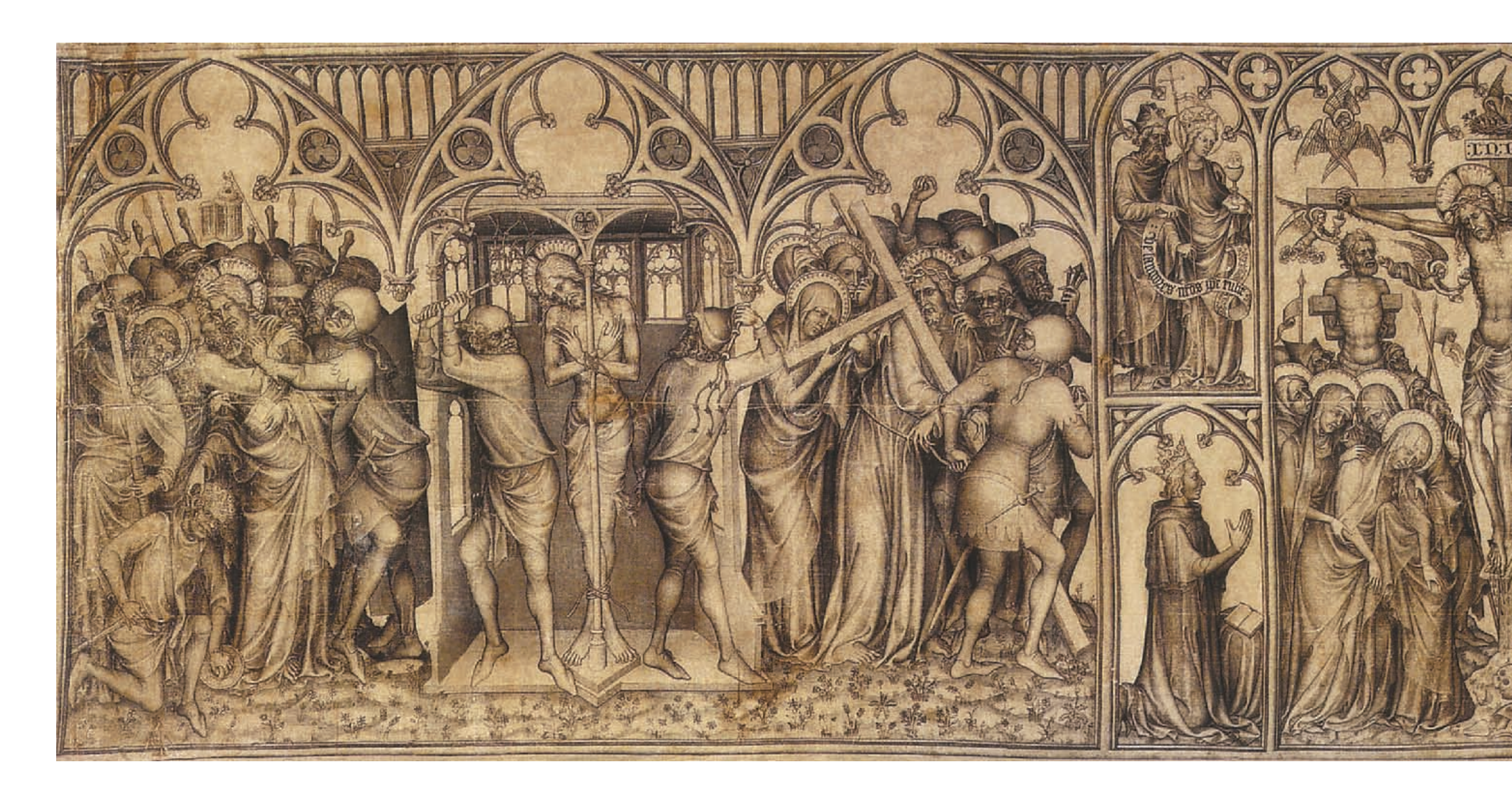
Diego Velázquez, *Christ after the Flagellation Contemplated by the Christian Soul* or *Christ at the Pillar,* 1628-1629.
Oil on canvas, 165.1 x 206.4 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

Sir Anthony van Dyck, *The Crown of Thorns,* c. 1618-1620.
Oil on canvas, 224 x 197 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid. (p. 202)

Quentin Massys, *Christ Presented to the People,* 1518-1520.
Oil on panel, 160 x 120 cm.
Museo del Prado, Madrid. (p. 203)







Peter and John had followed their master to Hanan's house. John, who was known in the house, was admitted without difficulty; but Peter was stopped at the entrance, and John was obliged to beg the portress to let him pass. The night was cold. Peter remained in the antechamber, and approached a brazier about which the servants were warming themselves. He was quickly recognized as a disciple of the accused. The wretched man, betrayed by his Galilean accent, pressed with questions by the servants, one of whom was a relative of Malek and had seen him in Gethsemane, denied three times that he had ever had the least connection with Jesus. He thought that Jesus could not hear him, and did not realize that this cowardly dissimulation was utterly unscrupulous. But his better nature quickly revealed to him the fault which he had committed. A fortuitous circumstance, the crowing of the cock, recalled to him the words which Jesus had spoken. Pricked to the heart, he went out and wept bitterly.

Hanan, although the real author of the judicial murder which was to be committed, had no power to pronounce a sentence on Jesus. He sent him to his son-in-law Caiaphas, who wore the official title. This man, the blind instrument of his father-in-law, ratified all as a matter of course. The Sanhedrin was assembled at his house. The examination commenced with several witnesses who prepared in advance according to the inquisitorial process set forth in the Talmud, appeared before the tribunal. The fatal words which Jesus had really pronounced: "I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days," were cited by two witnesses. To blaspheme the temple of God was, according to the Jewish law, to blaspheme God himself. Jesus kept silent and refused to explain the incriminating words. According to one narrative, the high priest then adjured him to say whether he was the Messiah. Jesus confessed it and proclaimed before the assembly the speedy coming of his heavenly kingdom. The courage of Jesus determined upon death, does not call for this. It is most probable that here he held his



peace. This was in general during these last hours his rule of conduct. The sentence was drawn up. Pretexts only were sought. Jesus knew it, and did not undertake a useless defence. From the standpoint of orthodox Judaism he was indeed a blasphemer, a destroyer of the established worship; now these crimes were punished with death by the law.With a unanimous voice the assembly declared him guilty of capital crime. The members of the council who were secretly favourable to him were absent or did not vote. The frivolity common to long established aristocracies prevented the judges from reflecting at length upon the consequences of the sentence which they gave. Human life was then sacrificed very lightly; undoubtedly the members of the Sanhedrin did not dream that their children were to render account to an angry posterity for the sentence pronounced with such careless contempt.

The Sanhedrin had no right to execute a sentence of death, but, in the confusion of powers then reigning in Judea, Jesus was none the less, from that hour, a condemned man. He remained during the rest of the night exposed to the ill treatment of a base varlet, who spared him no affront.

In the morning, the chief priests and the elders assembled again. The question was, how to make Pilate ratify the sentence pronounced by the Sanhedrin, which, since the occupation of the Romans, was insufficient. The procurator was not invested like the imperial legate with the power of life and death. But Jesus was not a Roman citizen; the authorization of the governor sufficed to allow the sentence pronounced against him to take its course. As always happens when a political people subject a nation in which the civil and religious law are one, the Romans had been led to give a sort of official support to the Jewish law. The Roman law did not apply to the Jews. They remained under the canonical law which we find in the Talmud. Although neutral in religion, the Romans thus sanctioned very often

The Narbonne Altercloth, c. 1375.
Altar-hanging, gray wash on fluted silk imitating samit, 75 x 208 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



Pieter Bruegel the Elder,
Christ Carrying the Cross, 1564.
Oil on wood, 124 x 170 cm.
Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.



penalties for religious offences. The situation was almost that of the holy cities of India under the English rule, or still more like what the condition of Damascus would be on the morning after the conquest of Syria by a European nation. Josephus claimed, (but it is indeed doubtful,) that if a Roman passed beyond the columns which bore inscriptions forbidding pagans to go farther, the Romans themselves delivered him to the Jews to be put to death.

The officers of the priests then bound Jesus and led him to the praetorium, which was the former palace of Herod adjoining the Antonia tower. It was the morning of the day when they were to eat the paschal lamb, (Friday, the 14th of Nisan, April 3rd). The Jews, by entering the presidium, would be defiled and rendered unable to participate in the sacred feast. Pilate, advised of their presence, mounted the tribunal that was situated outside at the spot called Lithostrotos because of the tessellated pavement which covered the ground. Hardly was he informed of the accusation before he expressed his displeasure at being concerned in the matter. Then he shut himself up in the praetorian with Jesus. There took place a conversation the precise details of which have escaped us, no witness being able to report it to the disciples, but the purpose that appears to have been well divined by John. His narrative indeed is in perfect accord with what history informs us of the reciprocal situation of the two interlocutors.

The procurator Pontius, surnamed Pilatus, doubtless from the javelin of honour with which he himself or one of his ancestors had been decorated, had hitherto any relation with the infant sect. Indifferent to the internal quarrels of the Jews, he saw in all these movements of sectaries nothing more than the effects of intemperate imaginations or of disordered wits. In general, he did not love the Jews. But the Jews detested him still more; they thought him severe, contemptuous and passionate; they accused him of improbable crimes. The centre of a great popular fermentation, Jerusalem was a very seditious city, and to a stranger an unendurable place of residence. The zealots imputed to the new procurator a fixed design to abolish the Jew. Their narrow fanaticism, their religious hatred was revolting to this broad idea of justice and civil government, which the humblest Roman citizen carried with him everywhere. All the acts of Pilate which are known to us show him as a good administrator. In the first days of his rule he had had difficulties with those under his administration which he had settled in a very brutal manner, but in which it seems that he was substantially right. The Jews must have appeared to him a very backward race; he judged them undoubtedly as a liberal prefect formerly judged the Bas-Bretons, revolting for a new road, or for the establishment of a school. In his best projects for the good of the country notably in all that pertained to public works, he had encountered the Law as an insuperable obstacle. The Law restricted life to such an extent that it opposed all change and all amelioration. Roman constructions, even those most useful, were to the zealous Jews an object of great antipathy. Two votive shields, with inscriptions, which he had placed opposite his residence, near the sacred enclosure, provoked a yet more violent storm. Pilate at first paid little attention to these susceptibilities and became thus engaged in repressing bloody outbreaks, which led to his removal. The experience of so many conflicts had rendered him very prudent in his dealings with an intractable people, who avenged themselves on their masters by compelling them to use against them execrable severities. With extreme displeasure, the procurator saw himself led in this new matter to act a cruel part for a law which he hated. He knew that religious fanaticism, when it has obtained from civil governments some deed of violence, is straightway the first to throw upon them the responsibility, and almost to accuse them of it. Supreme injustice; for the real criminal, in such a case, is the instigator!



Pilate would, therefore, have preferred to save Jesus. Perhaps the calm and dignified attitude of the accused made some impression upon him. According to one tradition, Jesus found a support in the wife of the procurator herself. She might have seen the gentle Galilean from some window of the palace, looking upon the courts of the temple. Perhaps she saw him again in a dream, and the blood of this beautiful young man, which was about to be shed, gave her a nightmare. So much is certain, that Jesus found Pilate predisposed in his favour. The governor questioned him with kindness, and with the intention of seeking all means to set him free.

The title of "King of the Jews," which Jesus had never glorified himself, but which his enemies presented as the sum of his acts and pretensions, was naturally that by which they could excite the umbrage of the Roman authority. It was on this charge, as seditious and guilty of crime against the State, that they undertook to accuse him. Nothing was more unjust and Jesus had always recognized the Roman empire as the established power. But conservative religious parties are not accustomed to recoil at the utterance of calumny. They deduced in spite of him all the consequences of his doctrine, they transformed him into a disciple of Juda the Gaulonite, and they feigned that he opposed the payment of tribute to Caesar. Pilate asked him if he was really the king of the Jews. Jesus dissembled nothing of

Jan Brueghel the Elder,
Christ Carrying the Cross, c. 1606.
Oil on copper, 13 x 18 cm.
Kunsthaus, Zurich.



his thought. But the great ambiguity which had created his power, and which after his death was to constitute his royalty did not avail him now. An idealist, that is, making no distinction between spirit and matter, his mouth armed with his two-edged sword, according to the image of the Apocalypse, Jesus never completely reassured the powers of the earth. If we may believe John, he avowed his royalty, but pronounced at the same time this profound sentence: “My kingdom is not of this world.” Then he explained the nature of his royalty, all being summed up in the possession and proclamation of the truths. Jesus appeared to him as an inoffensive dreamer. The total lack of religious and philosophical proselytise among the Romans of that epoch made them look upon devotion to truth as a chimera. These discussions wearied them, and appeared to them devoid of sense, not seeing how dangerous to the empire was the leaven concealed in these new speculations, they had no reason to employ violence against them. All their displeasure fell upon those who came to ask them to administer punishments for empty subtleties. Twenty years later Gallio still followed the same line of conduct with the Jews. Until the destruction of Jerusalem, the administrative rule of the Romans was to remain completely indifferent to these quarrels of sectaries.

One expedient suggested itself to the mind of the governor to reconcile his own feelings with the demands of the fanatical people whose pressure he had already so many times experienced. It was the custom at the feast of the Passover to deliver to the people a prisoner. Pilate, knowing that Jesus had been arrested only in consequence of the jealousy of the priests, hoped to give him the benefit of this custom. He appeared again upon him, and proposed to the multitude to release “the king of the Jews.” The proposition made in these terms had a certain character of liberality, and, at the same time, of irony. The priests saw its danger. They acted promptly, and to defeat the proposition of Pilate, they suggested to the multitude the name of a prisoner who enjoyed great popularity in Jerusalem. By a singular chance, he also was called Jesus, and bore the surname of Bar-Abba or Bar-Rabban. This was a well known person who had been arrested for a riot accompanied with murder. A general clamour arose: “Not this one; but Jesus Bar-Rabban.” Pilate was obliged to give up Jesus Bar-Rabban.

His embarrassment increased. He feared lest too much indulgence for a prisoner to whom was given the title of “king of the Jews,” should compromise him. Fanaticism, moreover, leads all powers to treat with it. Pilate thought himself obliged to make some concession; but still hesitating at bloodshed to satisfy people whom he detested, he endeavoured to give the matter a ridiculous turn. Professing to laugh at the pompous title given to Jesus, he caused him to be whipped. Flagellation was the ordinary preliminary of crucifixion. Perhaps Pilate wished to lead them to believe that that sentence was already pronounced, while yet hoping that the preliminary punishment would suffice. Then followed, according to all the narratives, a revolting scene. Soldiers put upon his body a red gown, a crown woven of thorn branches upon his head, and a reed in his hand. Thus covered, he was led out before the people. The soldiers defiled him, slapped him in the face each in turn, and, kneeling, said: “Hail, king of the Jews!” Others, it is said, spit upon him and struck him upon the head with the reed. It is difficult to understand how Roman gravity should have lent itself to acts so shameful. It is true that Pilate, in his capacity of procurator had scarcely any but auxiliary troops under his orders. Roman citizens, like the legionaries, would not have descended to such indignities.

Did Pilate think by this parade to cover up his responsibility? Did he hope to turn aside the blow which menaced Jesus by according something to the hatred of the Jews, and by substituting for the tragic termination a grotesque ending, from which it would seem to result that the matter merited

Rembrandt Harmensz. van Rijn,
Elevation of the Cross, 1634.
Oil on canvas, 96.2 x 76.2 cm.
Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

The Fieschi Morgan Staurotheke, c. 800.
Cloisonné enamel, silver, silver-gilt,
gold, niello, 7.1 x 9.8 x 0.3 cm.
Metropolitan Museum of Art,
New York. (p. 212)

Court School of Charles the Bald,
Jeweled upper cover of the Lindau Gospels, c. 880.
Repoussé gold and jewels, 35 x 27.5 cm.
The Morgan Library & Museum,
New York. (p. 213)



ΟΑΓΙΟC ΔΗΜΙΤΡΙΟC
ΟΑΓΙΟC
ЄΥCΤΑΘΙΟC
ΟΑΓΙΟC ΛΑΥΡΕΝΤΙΟC
IC
ΙΔΩΥ ѠCCΟΥ
ΙΔΟΥΗ ΜΙΤΙΡC
ΙΟΥΔΑC
ΜΑΤΘΕΟC
ΒΑΡΘΟΛΟΜΕΟ
ΜΑΡΚΟC
ΘѠΜΑC
ΙΑΚΟΒΟC
ΓΡΙΓΟΡΙΟ
ΟΑΓΙΟC ΚΟCΜΑC
ΟΑΓΙΟC ΔΑΜΙΑΝΟC


HIC EST
REX IV
DEORV

no other issue? If such were his idea, he had no success. The tumult increased, and became a real sedition. Cries of "Let him be crucified! let him be crucified!" resounded on all sides. The priests, assuming a more and more exacting tone, declared the Law in peril, if the seducer were not punished with death. Pilate saw clearly that, to save Jesus, it would be necessary to quell a bloody riot. Nevertheless, he still endeavoured to gain time. He entered the praetorium again, and informed himself of what country Jesus was, seeking some pretext for denying his jurisdiction. According to one tradition, he even sent Jesus to Antipater, who, it is said, was then at Jerusalem. Jesus lent himself little to these kindly efforts; he preserved, as at the house of Caiaphas, a grave and dignified silence which astonished Pilate. The cries without became more and more threatening. They already denounced the lack of zeal of the missionary who favoured an enemy of Caesar. The greatest adversaries of the Roman domination were transformed into legal subjects of Tiberius, in order to gain the right to accuse the too tolerant procurator of high treason. "There is no king here," they said, "but the emperor; whosoever makes himself king, puts himself in opposition with the emperor. If the governor acquits the man, he is not the emperor's friend." The feeble Pilate faltered; he read in advance the report that his enemies would send to Rome, in which they would accuse him of having sustained a rival of Tiberius. Already, in the affair of the votive shields, the Jews had written to the emperor, and had been sustained. He feared for his position. By a condescension which was to deliver his name to the scourges of history, he yielded, casting, it is said, upon the Jews all responsibility for what should follow. The latter, according to the Christians, accepted it fully, crying: "His blood be on us and on our children".

Were these words really pronounced? We may doubt it. But they are the expression of a deep historical truth. Considering the position that the Romans had assumed in Judea, Pilate could hardly have done other than he did. How many sentences of death, dictated by religious intolerance, have forced the hand of the civil power. The king of Spain who, to please a fanatical clergy, gave up to butcher hundreds of his subjects, was more blameable than Pilate, for he represented a more complete power than was yet established at Jerusalem by the Romans. When the civil power becomes a persecutor or begins to intermeddle, at the solicitation of the priest, it proves its weakness. But let that government which in this regard is without sin, cast the first stone at Pilate. The "secular arm," behind which clerical cruelty shelters itself, is not the criminal. None can say that he has a horror of blood, when he causes it to be shed by his servants.

It was, therefore, neither Tiberius nor Pilate who condemned Jesus. It was the old Jewish party; it was the Mosaic law. According to our modern ideas there is no transmission of moral demerit from father to son; each must account to human as well as to divine justice only for what he himself has done. Every Jew, consequently, who in our day still suffers for the murder of Jesus, has a right to complain because perhaps he would have been a Simon the Pyrenean; perhaps at least he had not been with those who cried: "Crucify him!" But nations have their responsibility as well as individuals. Now, if ever crime was the crime of a nation, it was the execution of Jesus. This execution was "legal," in the sense that its first cause was a law which was the very soul of the nation. The Mosaic law, in its modern form, it is true, but yet its accepted form pronounced the sentence of death against every attempt to change the established worship. Now Jesus, without any doubt, attacked this worship, and aspired to destroy it. The Jews said to Pilate, with simple and true frankness: "We have a Law, and by our Law he ought to die; because he made himself the Son of God." The law was detestable; but it was the law of an ancient ferocity, and the hero who offered

The Missal of Reims (Missale Remenense): Crucifixion (top) *and Deposition* (bottom), 1285-1297. Parchment, 23.3 x 16.2 cm.


:MORTUUS:


I·N·R·I

himself to abrogate it must first of all suffer it. Alas, that more than two thousand years must pass away before the blood which he is now to shed shall bear its fruits! In his name, for centuries, the tortures of death shall be inflicted upon thinkers as noble as he. Today even, in countries which call themselves Christian, penalties are imposed for religious delinquencies. Jesus is not responsible for these mutations. He could not foresee that any people, with disordered imagination, would one day conceive him frightful or greedy for burning flesh. Certainly, the pagan world had also its religious violence. But if it had had that law, how would it have become Christian? The Pentateuch was thus the first code of religious terror in the world. Judaism has given the example of an immutable dogma, armed with the sword. If, instead of pursuing the Jews with a blind hatred, Christianity had abolished the regime which slew its founder, how much more consistent would it have been, how much better it would have deserved of mankind.

The Death of Jesus

Although the real motive of the execution of Jesus was wholly religious, his enemies had succeeded, at the praetoriam, in presenting him as guilty of treason; they would not have obtained from the sceptical Pilate a condemnation for cause of heterodoxy. Following out this idea, the priests, through the multitude, demanded the execution of Jesus by the cross. Crucifixion was not of Jewish origin; had the condemnation of Jesus been purely Mosaic, he would have been stoned. The cross was a Roman punishment, reserved for slaves and those cases in which it was desired to add to death the aggravation of ignominy. In applying it to Jesus, he was treated like highway-robbers, brigands, bandits, or those enemies of an inferior class to whom the Romans did not accord the honour of death by the sword. It was the chimerical "king of the Jews," not the heterodox dogmatist who was punished. In consequence of the same idea, the execution was of necessity abandoned to the Romans. We know that, among the Romans, soldiers, slaughter being their occupation, performed the office of executioners. Jesus was therefore delivered to a cohort of auxiliary troops, and all the horror of the tortures introduced by the cruel customs of the new conquerors was unfolded before him. It was about noon. He was dressed in his clothes which they had taken off to parade him before the people, and as the cohort had already in reserve two thieves to be executed, they put the three prisoners together, and the cortege took up its march for the place of execution.

This place was a spot called Golgotha, situated outside of Jerusalem, but near the walls of the city. The name Golgotha or skull; it corresponds, it seems, to the word Ghaumont (Baldmount) and probably designates a smooth hill, having the form of a bald skull. We know not with exactitude the situation of this hill. It was surely to the north or north-west of the city, in the high rolling plain which is bounded by the walls and the two valleys of Kidron and Hinnom, a miserable region, made still more melancholy by the disagreeable incidents of its proximity to a great city. It is difficult to place Golgotha on the precise spot where, since Constantine, all Christendom has revered it. This spot is too near the interior of the city, and we are inclined to believe that in the time of Jesus it was comprised within the circuit of the walls.

He who was condemned to crucifixion had himself to bear the instrument of his torture. But Jesus, weaker than his two companions, could not bear his. The squad met a certain Simon of Cyrene,

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio),
The Crucifixion, 1558.
Oil on canvas, 371 x 197 cm.
Church of San Domenico, Ancona.

who was returning from the country, and the soldiers, with the rough procedure of a foreign garrison, forced him to bear the fatal tree. They exercised in this a recognized right of impressments, Romans not being able to cumber themselves with the infamous wood. It seems that afterwards Simon belonged to the Christian community. His two sons, Alexander and Eufus, were well known in it. He related perhaps more than one circumstance which he had witnessed. No disciple was at this time near Jesus.

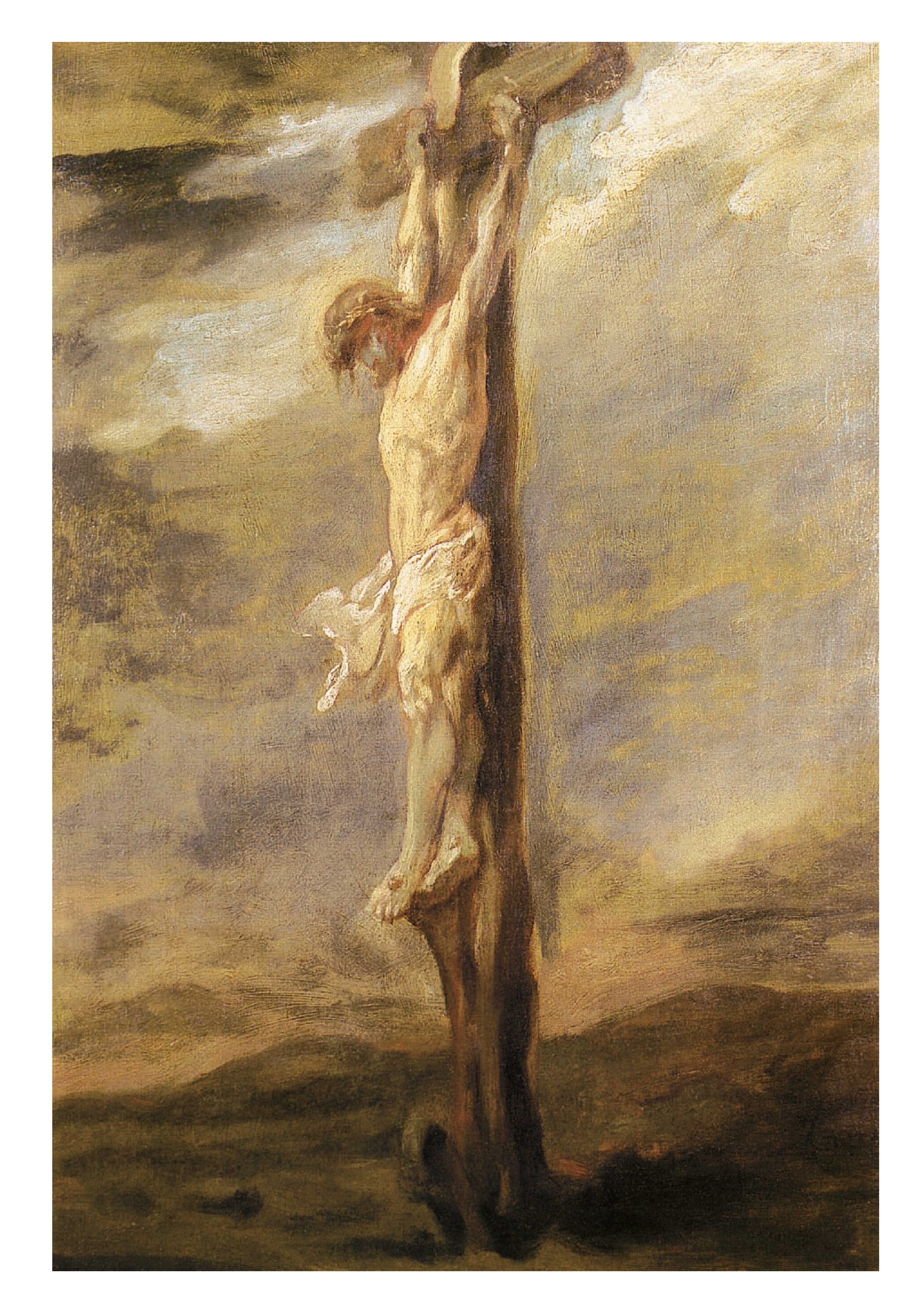
They finally reached the place of execution. According to Jewish usage, the victims were offered a highly spiced wine, an intoxicating drink, which from a sentiment of pity was given to the sufferer to stupify him. It seems that the women of Jerusalem themselves often brought to the unfortunates who were led out to torture this wine of the dying; when none of them came it was bought at the expense of the public treasury. Jesus, after having touched the cup to his lips, refused to drink. This sad solace of common criminals was unsuited to his lofty nature. He preferred to go out of life with his mind perfectly unclouded and to await with full consciousness the death which he had wished and invoked. He was then despoiled of his garments and fastened to the cross. The cross was composed of two beams attached in the form of a T. It was quite low, so low that the feet of the victim almost touched the ground. The cross was first set up, then the prisoner was fastened to it by driving nails through his hands. The feet were often nailed or sometimes merely tied with cords. A billet of wood, a sort of arm, was fastened to the stem of the cross, towards the middle, and passed between the legs of the victim, who rested upon it. Without this the hands would have been torn and the body would have sunk down. At other times, a horizontal tablet was fixed at the hilt of the feet and sustained them.

Jesus tasted these horrors in all their atrocity. A burning thirst, one of the tortures of crucifixion, devoured him. He asked for drink. There was at hand a cup of the ordinary drink of the Roman soldiers, a mixture of vinegar and water, called posoa. Soldiers had to carry their posoa with them in all their expeditions, among which executions were counted. A soldier dipped a sponge in this drink, put it on the end of a reed, and bore it to the lips of Jesus, who sucked it. The thieves were crucified on either side. The executioners, to whom were ordinarily abandoned the minor spoils of criminals, drew lots for his garments, and, seated at the foot of the cross, guarded him. According to one tradition, Jesus pronounced the words, which were in his heart if not upon his lips: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”

An inscription, in accordance with the Roman custom, was attached to the top of the cross, bearing in three languages, Hebrew, Greek and Latin: the King of the Jews. There was in this wording something humiliating and opprobrious to the nation. The numerous passers who read it were shocked by it. The priests sent word to Pilate that he ought to adopt a wording that would imply only that Jesus had said that he was the king of the Jews. But Pilate, already disgusted with the case, refused to make any change in what was written.

His disciples had fled. John nevertheless declares that he was present and remained all the while standing at the foot of the cross. We can affirm with more certainty that the faithful women of Galilee, who had followed Jesus to Jerusalem, and continued to serve him, did not abandon him. Mary Cleophas, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Salome, and others besides, stood at a distance and watched him. If we may believe John, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was also at the foot of the cross, and Jesus, seeing his mother and his beloved disciple together, said to him: “Behold thy mother,” and

Christ on the Cross, c. 1647.
Oil on wood, 34.5 x 23.5 cm.
Musée Bonnat, Bayonne.





to her: "Behold thy son." But we cannot understand how the synoptic evangelists, who mention the other women by name, should have omitted her whose presence was so striking a fact. Perhaps indeed the extreme elevation of the character of Jesus does not render such a personal tenderness probable, at the moment when, entirely absorbed in his work, he no longer existed save for humanity.

Aside from this little group of women, who comforted his eyes from afar, Jesus had before him only the spectacle of human debasement or stupidity. The passers insulted him. He heard about him vulgar raillery, and his death cries of anguish turned into hateful mockeries. "Ah! behold him," they said, "he who called himself Son of God! Let his father come now and deliver him, if he will have him." "He saved others," it was muttered, "himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him!" "Ah", said a third, "thou that destroys the temple and builds it in three days, save thyself, and come down." Some, partially aware of his apocalyptic ideas, thought they heard him call Elias, and said: "Let us see whether Elias will come to take him down." It appears that the two thieves crucified beside him also reviled him. The sky was dark as well as the earth, as in all the environs of Jerusalem, dry and melancholy. For a moment, according to some accounts, his heart failed him; a cloud concealed the face of his Father; he endured an agony of despair, a thousand times more excruciating than all his tortures. He saw nothing but the ingratitude of man; perhaps not repented having suffered for a vile race, and he cried out: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" But his divine instinct resumed its sway. In

William Blake, *Plate 76 from 'Jerusalem: The Emanation of the Giant Albion',* c. 1804-1820.
Relief etching printed on orange paper, filled with pen and watercolour,
22.6 x 16.3 cm.
Yale Center for British Art, New Haven.

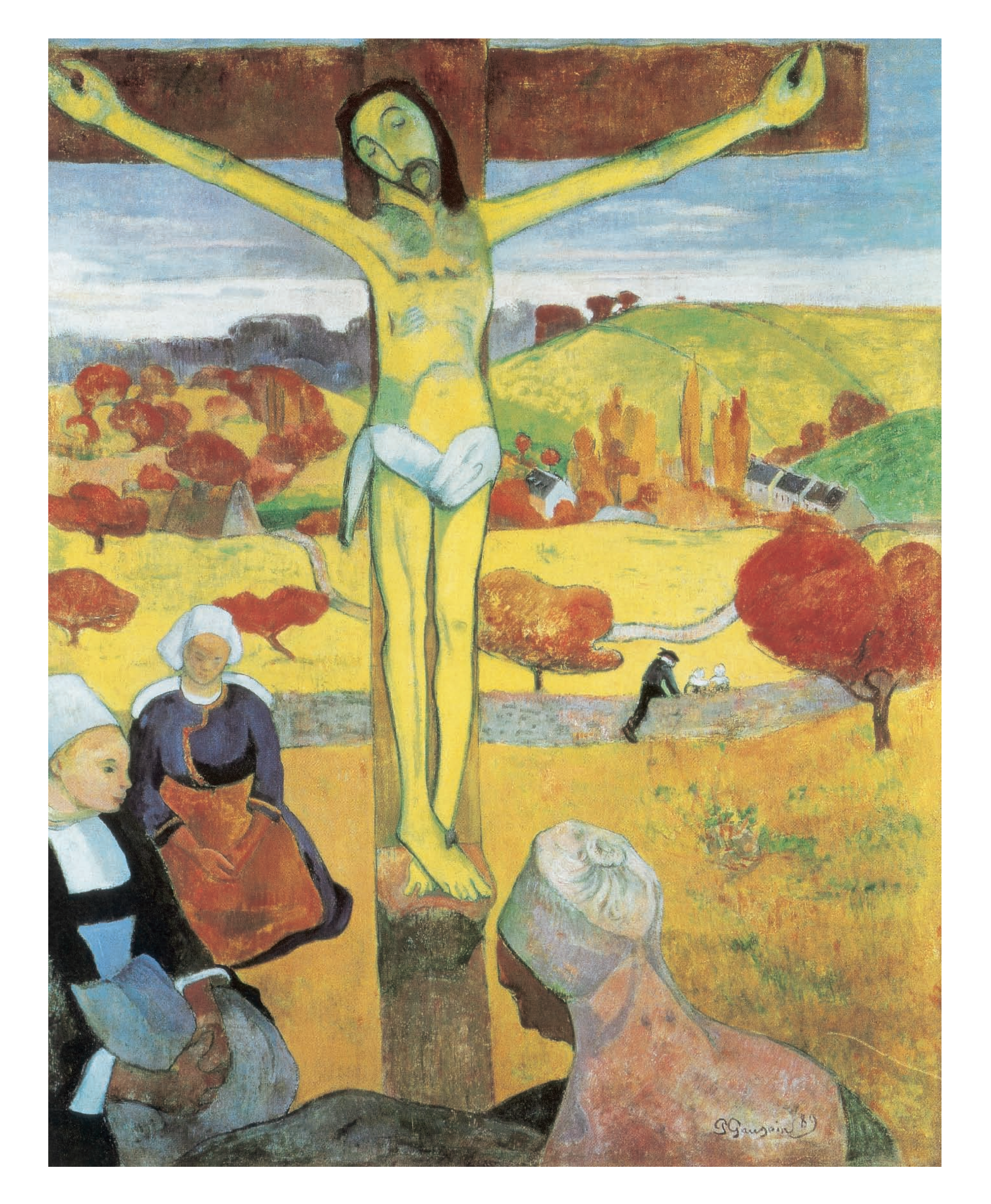


proportion as the life of his body was extinguished, his soul became serene and gradually returned to its celestial source. He regained the consciousness of his mission; he saw in his death the salvation of the world; he lost sight of the hideous spectacle exhibited at his feet, and, thoroughly made one with his Father, he commenced upon the cross the divine life which he was to lead in the heart of humanity for infinite ages.

The peculiar atrocity of crucifixion was that a man might live three or four days in this horrible condition upon the seat of anguish. The bleeding from his hands very soon ceased and was not mortal. The true cause of death was the unnatural position of the body, which induced a hideous disturbance in the circulation, fearful pains in the head and heart, and finally rigidity of the limbs. Men of strong constitutions died only of hunger. The principal idea of this cruel punishment was not to kill the criminal directlys, but to expose the slave, nailed by the hands of which he had not known how to make proper use, and let him rot upon the tree. The delicate organization of Jesus preserved him from this slow agony. Everything leads to the belief that the rupture of a blood vessel produced at the end of three hours time, immediate death. A few moments before he rendered up his soul, his voice was still strong.

Suddenly he uttered a terrible cry, which some heard: "O, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!" and which others, more attentive to the prophecies, rendered by these words: "All things are accomplished!" His head fell upon his breast, and he died.

William Blake, *The Crucifixion, "Behold Thy Mother",* c. 1805.
Pen and ink and watercolour on paper, 41.3 x 30 cm.
Tate Gallery, London.


P Gauguin 89

Rest now in thy glory, noble founder. Thy work is finished; thy divinity is established. Fear no more to see the edifice of thy labours fall by any fault. Henceforth, beyond the reach of frailty, thou shalt witness from the heights of divine peace, the infinite results of thy acts. At the price of a few hours of suffering, which did not even reach thy grand soul, thou hast bought the most complete immortality. For thousands of years, the world will depend on thee! Banner of our contests, thou shalt be the standard about which the hottest battle will be given. A thousand times more alive, a thousand times more beloved, since thy death than during thy passage here below, thou shalt become the corner-stone of humanity so entirely, that to tear thy name from this world would be to rend it to its foundations. Between thee and God, there will no longer be any distinction. Complete conqueror of death, take possession of thy kingdom, whither shall follow thee, by the royal road which thou hast traced, ages of worshippers.

At the Tomb

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon according to our method of reckoning, when Jesus expired. A Jewish law prohibited leaving a dead body suspended on the cross beyond the evening of the day of execution. It is not probable that, in executions conducted by the Romans, this command was observed. But as the next day was the Sabbath, and a Sabbath of peculiar solemnity, the Jews expressed to the Roman authority the desire that this holy day should not be polluted by such a spectacle. Their request was acceded to; orders were given to hasten the death of the three prisoners, and to take them down from the cross. The soldiers executed this command by applying to the two thieves a second punishment, much more speedy than that of the cross, the crucifixion, the breaking of the legs, the ordinary punishment of slaves and prisoners of war. As for Jesus, they found him dead, and did not deem it necessary to break his legs. One of them, however, in order to remove all uncertainty of the actual death of the third victim, and to ascertain whether there still remained any spark of life, pierced his side with a lance. They thought that they saw blood and water flow out which was regarded as a sign of the cessation of life.

John, who claims that he saw it, dwells strongly upon this circumstance. It is evident clearly that doubts arose as to the reality of the death of Jesus. A few hours of suspension upon the cross seemed to persons accustomed to see executions altogether insufficient to produce such a result. Many cases were cited of crucified persons who, taken down in time, had been restored to life by energetic remedies. Later, Origen felt compelled to invoke the miraculous in order to explain so speedy an end. The same astonishment is found in the narrative of Mark. In reality, the best guarantee which the historian possesses upon a point of this nature, is the suspicious hatred of the enemies of Jesus. It is doubtful whether the Jews were, thus, early affected by the fear lest Jesus should be thought to be raised from the dead: but at all events they must have made certain that he was actually dead. Whatever may have been at certain periods the negligence of the ancients in all that pertains to legal verification and the strict conduct of affairs, we cannot believe that those who were interested did not take some precautions in this regard.

According to the Roman custom, the body of Jesus should have remained suspended to become the prey of the birds. According to the Jewish law, taken away at night, it should have been carried to the infamous spot set apart for the sepulchre of criminals. Had Jesus numbered among his disciples only his poor Galileans, timid and without credit, the latter rule would have been followed. But we have seen

Paul Gauguin, *The Yellow Christ,* 1889.
Oil on canvas, 92 x 73 cm.
Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo.

Heinrich Nauen, *Lamentation of Christ,* from the *Drove Cycle* painted for Drove Castle, 1913.
Tempera on canvas, 210 x 320 cm.
Kaiser Wilhelm Museum, Krefeld.
(pp. 224-225)

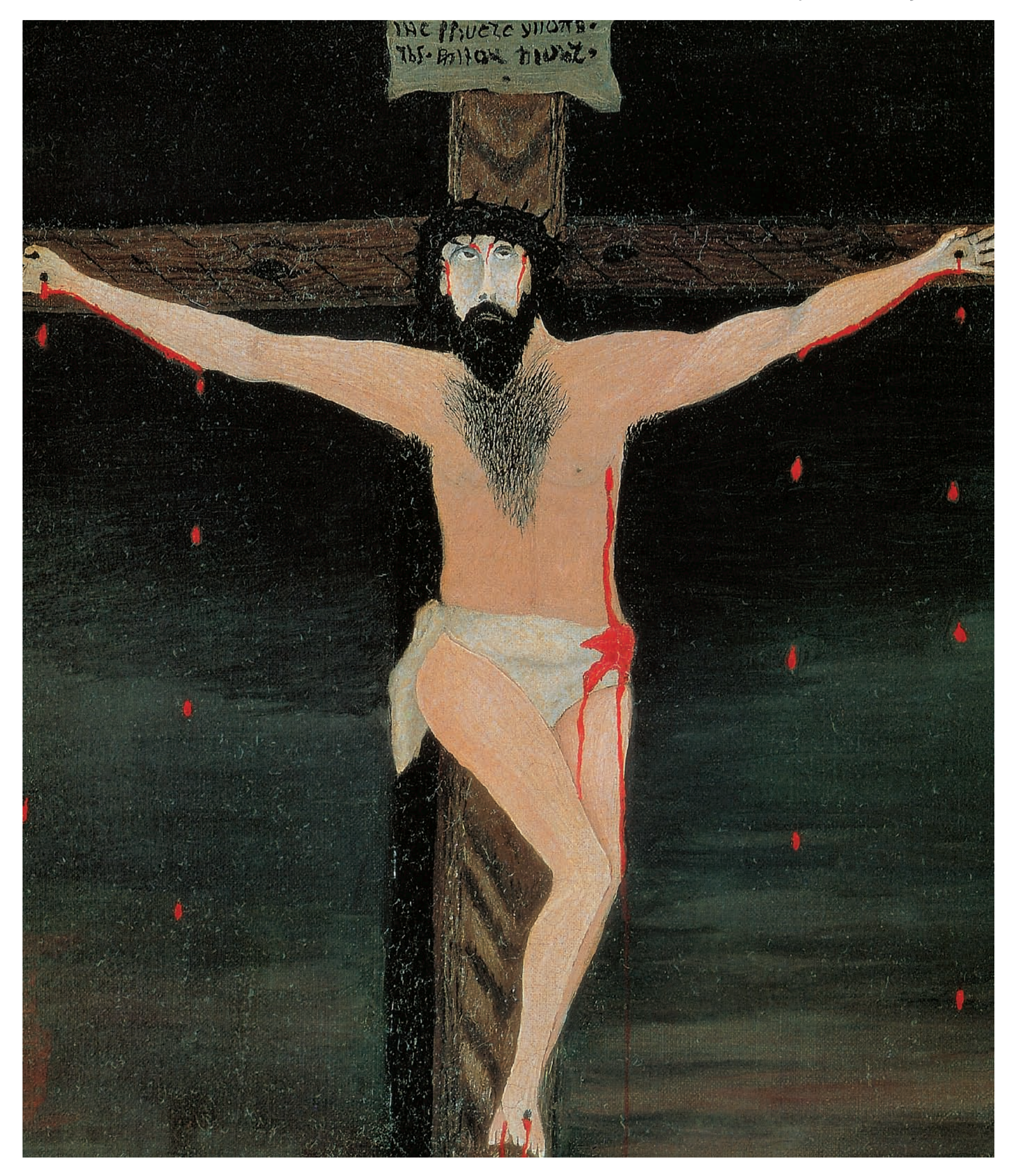
William H. Johnson, *Mount Calvary,* c. 1944.
Oil on paperboard, 70.5 x 84.9 cm.
Smithsonian American Museum of Art, Washington, D. C. (p. 226)

Horace Pippin, *The Crucifixion (detail),* 1943.
Oil on canvas, 40.6 x 50.8 cm.
Menil Collection, Houston. (p. 227)






W.H. Johnson





that in spite of his limited success at Jerusalem, Jesus had gained the sympathy of some persons of consideration, who were awaiting the kingdom of God, and who, without avowing themselves his disciples, felt a very deep attachment towards him. One of these persons, Joseph of the little village of Arimathea, went at evening and asked the body of the procurator. Joseph was a rich and honourable man, a member of the Sanhedrin. The Roman law at that time directed, moreover, that the dead body of the sufferer should be given to whomsoever claimed it. Pilate, who was ignorant of the circumstances of the crucifixion, was astonished that Jesus should be dead so soon and sent for the centurion who conducted the execution, to know what it meant. After having received the assurances of the centurion, Pilate accorded to Joseph the object of his request. The body, probably, had already been taken down from the cross. It was delivered to Joseph to be dealt with as he chose.

Another secret friend, Nicodemus, whom we have already seen more than once using his influence in favor of Jesus, was met again. He came bringing an ample store of the substances necessary for embalming. Joseph and Nicodemus buried Jesus according to the Jewish custom, that is, by enveloping him in a shroud with myrrh and aloes. The Galilean women were present and doubtless accompanied the scene with tears and piercing cries.

It was late, and all this was done in great haste. They had not yet chosen a final resting-place for the body. The removal would, moreover, have occupied them until a late hour, and necessitated a violation of the Sabbath; now the disciples still conscientiously observed the commands of the Jewish law. They decided therefore in favour of a temporary burial. There was nearby in a garden, a tomb recently cut in the rock, which had never been used. It belonged probably to some believer. These sepulchres, when intended for a single body, were composed of a little chamber, in the rear of which the place for the body was indicated by a trough or couch scooped out in the wall and surmounted by an arch. As these caves were cut in the sides of inclined rocks, they were entered on a level with the ground and the entrance was closed by a very heavy stone. Jesus was laid in the vault; the stone was rolled to the entrance, and they promised themselves to return and give him a more complete sepulchre. But the morrow being a solemn Sabbath, the work was remitted to the third day.

The women retired, after having carefully noticed how the body was laid. They employed the hours of the evening which remained in making additional preparations for embalming. On Saturday all rested.

On Sunday morning, the women, Mary Magdalene first of all, came very early to the tomb. The stone was rolled away from the opening, and the body was no longer in the place where they had laid it. At the same time, the strangest reports began to spread through the Christian community. The cry, “He is risen!” ran among the disciples like lightning. Love gave it everywhere easy credence. What had taken place? In treating of the history of the apostles it is that we shall have to examine this point, and seek the origin of the legends relating to the resurrection. The life of Jesus, to the historian, ends with his last sigh. But so deep was the trace which he had left in the hearts of his disciples and of a few devoted women, that, for weeks to come, he was to them living and consoling. Had his body been taken away, or did enthusiasm, always credulous, afterwards generate the mass of accounts by which faith in the resurrection was sought to be established? This, for want of peremptory evidence, we shall never know. We may say, however, that the strong imagination of Mary Magdalene here enacted a principal part. Divine power of love! sacred moments in which the passion of a hallucinated woman gives to the world a resurrected God!

Salvador Dalí, *Christ of Saint John of the Cross,* 1951.
Oil on canvas, 205 x 166 cm.
Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, Glasgow.



Christ's Work and Legacy

Jesus, it is seen, never went out of the Jewish circle. Although his sympathy for all those despised by the orthodoxy led him to admit the heathen into the kingdom of God, although he had more than once resided in a pagan country, and once or twice he is found in kindly relations with unbelievers, it may be said that his life was spent entirely in the little world, close and narrow as it was, in which he was born. The Greek and Roman countries heard nothing of him; his name does not figure in profane authors until a hundred years later, and then only indirectly, in connection with seditious movements provoked by his doctrine, or with persecutions of which his disciples were the object. Within the heart even of Judaism, Jesus did not make any durable impression, Philo, who died about the year 50, has no glimpse of him. Josephus, born in the year 37, and writing in the last years of the century, mentions his execution in a few lines, as an event of secondary importance in the enumeration of the sects of his time he omits the Christians. The Mischna again, presents no trace of the new school; the passages of the two Gemaras in which the founder of Christianity is named, do not carry us back beyond the fourth or fifth century. The essential work of Jesus was the creation around him of a circle of disciples in whom he inspired a boundless attachment, and in whose breast he implanted the germ of his doctrine. To have made himself beloved, "so much that after his death they did not cease to love him," this was the crowning work of Jesus, and that which most impressed his contemporaries. His doctrine was not at all dogmatic, that he never thought of writing it or having it written. A man became his disciple, not by believing this or that, but by following him and loving him. A few sentences treasured up in the memory, and above all, his moral type, and the impression which he had produced, were all that remained of him. Jesus is not a founder of dogmas, a maker of symbols; he is the world's initiator into a new spirit. The least Christian of men were, on the one hand, the doctors of the Greek Church, who from the fourth century involved Christianity in a series of puerile metaphysical discussions, and, on the other hand, the scholastics of the Latin middle ages, who attempted to draw from the Gospel the thousands of articles of a colossal "Summation." To adhere to Jesus in view of the kingdom of God was what it was originally to be a Christian.

Thus we comprehend how, by an exceptional destiny, pure Christianity still presents itself, at the end of twenty centuries, with the character of a universal and eternal religion. It is because in fact the religion of Jesus is, in some respects, the final religion. The fruit of a perfectly spontaneous movement of souls, free at its birth from every dogmatic constraint, having struggled three hundred years for liberty of conscience, Christianity, in spite of the falls which followed, still gathers the fruits of this surpassing origin. To renew itself, it has only to turn to the Gospel. The kingdom of God, as we conceive it, is widely different from the supernatural apparition which the first Christians expected to see burst forth in the clouds. But the sentiment which Jesus introduced into the world is really ours. His perfect idealism is the highest rule of unworldly and virtuous life. He has created that heaven of free souls, in which is found what we ask in vain on earth, the perfect nobility of the children of God,

Christ Pantocrator, 1148.
Mosaic.
Cefalù Cathedral, Cefalù.

Pietà Roettgen, c. 1360.
Poplar or willow, 89 x 49.5 cm.
LVR-LandesMuseum, Bonn. (p. 232)

Michelangelo Buonarroti, *Pietà,*
1498-1499.
Marble, 174 x 195 cm.
St. Peter's Basilica, Vatican City. (p. 233)







absolute purity, total abstraction from the contamination of the world, that freedom, in short, which material society shuts out as an impossibility, and which finds all its amplitude only in the domain of thought. The great master of those who take refuge in this ideal kingdom of God, is Jesus still. He first proclaimed the kingliness of the spirit; he first said, at least by his acts: “My kingdom is not of this world.” The foundation of the true religion is indeed his work. After him, there is nothing more but to develop and fructify.

Rogier van der Weyden, *The Descent from the Cross,* c. 1435.
Oil on panel, 220 x 262 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

Hans Memling, *Triptych of the Last Judgement,* central panel: *Judgement and Weighing of Souls,* c. 1467-1471.
Oil on oak panel, 221 x 161 cm.
Muzeum Nrodowe w Gdańsku, Gdańsk.

“Christianity” has thus become almost synonymous with “religion.” Jesus founded religion on humanity, as Socrates founded philosophy, as Aristotle founded science. There had been philosophy before Socrates and science before Aristotle. Since Socrates and Aristotle, philosophy and science have made immense progress; but all has been built upon the foundation which they laid. And so, before Jesus, religious thought had passed through many revolutions; since Jesus it has made great conquests; nevertheless it has not departed, it will not depart from the essential condition which Jesus created; he has fixed for eternity the idea of the pure worship. The religion of Jesus, in this







sense, is not limited. The Church has had its epochs and its phases; it has shut itself up in symbols which have had or will have their day. Jesus founded the absolute religion, excluding nothing, determining nothing, save its essence. His symbols are not fixed dogmas, but images susceptible of indefinite interpretations. We should seek vainly in the gospel for a theological proposition. All the professions of faith are disguises of the idea of Jesus, much as the scholasticism of the Middle Ages, by proclaiming Aristotle the sole master of a perfect science, was false to the thought of Aristotle. Aristotle, had he witnessed the discussions of the schools, would have repudiated this narrow doctrine; he would have been of the party of progressive science against the party of routine, which was shielding itself under his authority; he would have applauded his contradictors. And so, were Jesus to return among us, he would acknowledge as his disciples, not those who claim to include him entirely in a few phrases of the catechism, but those who labar to continue him. The eternal glory, in every order of grand achievements, is to have laid the first stone. It may be that, in the "Physics" and in the "Meteorology" of modern times there is found no word of the treatises of

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), *Noli me tangere,* c. 1514.
Oil on canvas, 110.5 x 91.9 cm.
The National Gallery, London.

Albert Pinkham Ryder, *Christ Appearing to Mary,* c. 1885.
Oil on canvas mounted on fiberboard, 36.1 x 43.8 cm.
Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D. C.

Aristotle which hear these titles: Aristotle is none the less the founder of natural science. Whatever may be the transformations of dogma, Jesus will remain in religion the creator of its pure sentiment: the Sermon on the Mount will never be surpassed. No revolution will lead us not to join in religion the grand intellectual and moral line at the head of which beams the name of Jesus. In this sense, we are Christians, even though we separate upon almost all points from the Christian tradition which has preceded us.

And this great foundation was truly the personal work of Jesus, To become adored to such a degree, he must have been adorable. Love does not exist without an object worthy to enkindle it, and did we know nothing of Jesus but the passion which he inspired in those around him, we must yet affirm that he was great and pure. The faith, the enthusiasm, the constancy of the first Christian generation is explained only by supposing at the beginning of the whole movement a man of colossal proportions. When we look upon the marvellous creations of the ages of faith, two impressions, equally fatal to good historical criticism, arise in the mind. On the one hand, we are led to suppose these creations too impersonal; we attribute to a collective action what often has been the work of one powerful will, of one superior spirit. On the other hand, we refuse to see men like ourselves in the authors of these extraordinary movements which nature conceals in her breast. Our civilizations, governed as they are by a minute policy, can give us no idea of the power of man in the ages when the originality of each had a freer field for development. Suppose a solitary dweller in the quarries near our capitals, going thence from time to time to the palaces of sovereigns, forcing an entrance, and, in an imperious tone, announcing to kings the approach of revolutions of which he has been the promoter. The idea alone makes us smile. Such, nevertheless, was Elijah. Elijah the Tishbite, in our days, could not pass the gate of the Tuileries. The preaching of Jesus and his freedom of action in Galilee are no less entirely beyond the social conditions to which we are accustomed. Untrammeled by our polite conventionalities, exempt from the uniform education which refines us, but which diminishes so greatly our individuality, these complete souls carry into action a surprising energy. They appear to us like the giants of a heroic age, who must have been unreal. This was a mistake. These men were our brothers; they were of our stature; they felt and thought as we do. But the breath of God was free with them; with us it is enchained by the iron bands of a society mean and condemned to an irremediable mediocrity.

Let us then place the person of Jesus on the highest summit of human grandeur. Let us not permit ourselves to be led astray by exaggerated distrust in regard to a legend which continually draws us into the supernatural world. The life of a Francis of Assisi is also only a tissue of miracle. Still has anybody ever doubted the existence and the character of Francis of Assisi? Let us say no more that the glory of the foundation of Christianity should be given to the mass of primitive Christians, and not to him whom the legend has deified. The inequality of men is even more marked in the East. It is not rare to see rising there, characters whose grandeur astonishes us. Far from having been created by his disciples, Jesus appears in all things superior to his disciples. They, St. Paul and St. John excepted, were men without talent or genius. St. Paul himself bears no comparison with Jesus, and as to St. John, I shall show hereafter that his character, very high in one sense, was far from being in all respects irreproachable. Hence the immense superiority of the Gospels among the writings of the New Testament. Hence the painful fall which we experience in passing from the history of Jesus to that of the Apostles. The evangelists themselves, who have bequeathed to us the image of Jesus, are so far below him of whom they speak, that they constantly disfigure him because

Maurice Denis, *Noli Me Tangere,*
1895-1896.
Sketch for a stained glass window;
oil on board, 84 x 35 cm.
Musée Départemental Maurice Denis
le Prieuré, Saint Germain-en-Laye.


noli me tangere



they cannot attain his height. Their writings are full of mistakes and misconceptions. At every line we recognise discourse of a divine beauty reported by writers who do not understand it, and who substitute their own ideas for those which they but half comprehend. Upon the whole, the character of Jesus, far from having been embellished by his biographers, has been belittled by them. Criticism, to discover what he really was, must eliminate a series of mistakes arising from the different understanding of the disciples. They have painted him as they conceived him, and often, while thinking to make him greater, have in reality made him less. I know that our modern ideas are wounded more than once in this tradition conceived by another race under another sky, in the midst of other social needs. There are virtues which, in some respects, are more in accordance with our taste. The noble and gentle Marcus Aurelius, the humble and mild Spinoza, not believing in miracles, were exempt from some errors in which Jesus shared. The second, in his profound obscurity had an advantage which Jesus did not seek. By our extreme scrupulousness in the employment of the means of conviction, by our absolute sincerity and our disinterested love of the pure idea, we all, who have devoted our lives to science, have founded a new ideal of morality. But the appreciations of universal history should not be confined to considerations of personal merit. Marcus Aurelius and his noble masters have had no lasting effect upon the world. Marcus Aurelius left behind him delightful books, an execrable son, a transitory world. Jesus remains to humanity an inexhaustible source of moral regenerations. Philosophy is not enough for the mass. It requires

Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Supper at Emmaüs,* 1601.
Oil and tempera on canvas,
141 x 196.2 cm.
The National Gallery, London.



sanctity. An Apollonius of Tyana, with his miraculous legend, was to have greater success than a Socrates with his cold reason. "Socrates, it was said, leaves men upon the earth, Apollonius transports them to heaven; Socrates is but a sage, Apollonius is a God." Religion, even until now, has never existed without some portion of asceticism, of sanctity, of the marvellous. Were it desired, like the Antonines, to make a religion of philosophy, it would have been necessary to transform the philosophers into saints, to write the "edifying Life" of Pythagoras and of Plotinus, to attribute to them a legend, virtues of abstinence and contemplation, supernatural powers without which neither credence nor authority was found with the age.

Let us guard, therefore, against mutilating history to satisfy our poor susceptibilities. Who of us is able to do what the extravagant Francis of Assisi, or the hysterical St. Theresa have done? Though medicine has names to express these great aberrations of human nature; though it maintains that genius be a disease of the brain; though it see in a certain delicacy of morality the commencement of phthisis; though it class enthusiasm and love among nervous symptoms, what matters that? The words of sick and well are altogether relative. Who would not rather be sick like Pascal than in good health like the multitude?The narrow ideas which are general in our day in regard to madness, mislead our historical judgment most seriously in questions of this kind. A condition in which a man says things of which he has no conscious knowledge, in which thought is produced

Titian (Tiziano Vecellio), *The Supper at Emmaüs,* c. 1530.
Oil on canvas, 169 x 244 cm.
Musée du Louvre, Paris.



without being called and regulated by the will, now exposes him to be shut up as a lunatic. Formerly, this was called prophecy and inspiration. The finest things in the world are done in a state of fever; every eminent creation involves a destruction of equilibrium, a violent condition for the being who produces it.

Certainly, we acknowledge that Christianity is a work too complex to have been the creation of a single man. In one sense, all humanity worked together upon it. There is no portion of the world so walled in that it does not receive some breath from without.

The history of the human mind is full of strange synchronisms by which far distant fragments of the human race attain at the same time without intercommunication, to ideas and imaginations almost identical. One would say that great moral influences sweep over the world like epidemics, without distinction of frontier or of nation. The commerce of ideas in the human race does not work by books or by direct teaching only. Jesus did not even know the name of Buddha, Zoroaster, or Plato; he had read no Greek book, no Buddhist, and yet there is in him more than one element which, without his knowledge, came from Buddhism, from Parseeism, or from the wisdom of the Greeks. All this is done through secret channels and by that species of sympathy which exists between various divisions of humanity. The great man, on the one hand, receives all things from his time; on the other, he masters his time. To show that the religion founded by Jesus was the natural consequence of what had preceded, is not to diminish its excellence; it is to prove that there was a reason for its existence that it was natural, that is to say, conformable to the instincts and to the needs of the heart in a given age.

Is it more just to say that Jesus owed all to Judaism, and that his grandeur is none other than that of the Jewish people? No person is more disposed than I to give a lofty place to this unique people, whose peculiar province it seems to have been to compass the extremes of good and evil. Undoubtedly Jesus emanates from Judaism; but he emanates from it as Socrates emanated from the schools of the Sophists, as Luther emanated from the Middle Ages, like Lamennais from Catholicism, like Rousseau from the eighteenth century. A man belongs to his age and his race, even when he reacts against his age and his race. Far from being the continuator of Judaism, Jesus represents the breaking off with the Jewish spirit. Even supposing that his thought in this regard may leave room for some uncertainty, the general direction of Christianity after him permits none. The general progress of Christianity has been to separate more and more from Judaism. Its perfection will be in returning to Jesus, but certainly not in returning to Judaism. The great originality of the founder, therefore, remains complete; his glory admits no rightful sharer.

Undoubtedly circumstances counted much in the success of this revolution; but circumstances only second that which is just and true. Each branch of the development of humanity has its privileged epoch, in which it attains perfection by a sort of spontaneous instinct and without effort. No labour of reflection succeeds in producing immediately those master-pieces which nature creates at such moments, through the inspiration of genius. What the beautiful ages of Greece were to the arts and profane literature, the age of Jesus was to religion. Jewish society presented the most extraordinary intellectual and moral condition through which the human species has ever passed. It was truly one of those divine hours when the grand is produced by the collaboration of a thousand concealed forces, when beautiful souls find to sustain them a tide of admiration and of sympathy. The world,

El Greco (Doménikos Theotokópoulos),
The Resurrection of Christ, 1605-1610.
Oil on canvas, 275 x 127 cm.
Museo Nacional del Prado, Madrid.

Anastasis, 1315-1321.
Fresco.
Chora Church (Kariye Camii), Istanbul.
(pp. 244-245)


Η ΑΝΑϹΤΑϹΙϹ
IC


XC

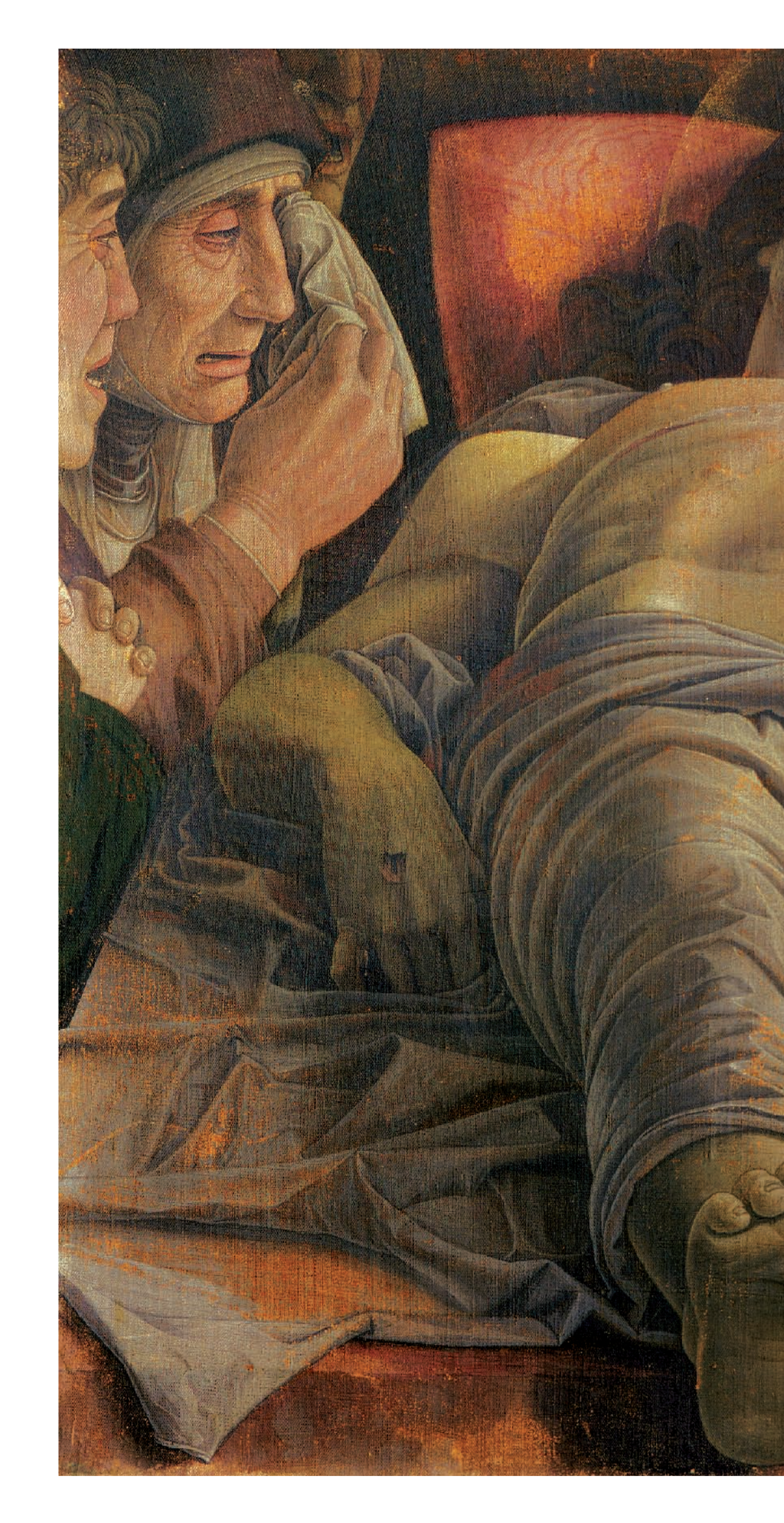
freed from the petty tyranny of little municipal republics, enjoyed great liberty. Roman despotism did not make itself felt until much later, and, besides, it was always less burdensome in these distant provinces than at the centre of the empire. Our petty preventive annoyances (far more murderous than death to the things of the spirit) did not exist. Jesus, for three years, was able to lead a life which, in our state of society, would have brought him before the police courts twenty times. Our laws concerning the illegal practice of medicine alone, would have sufficed to cut short his career. The incredulous dynasty of Herod, moreover, concerned itself little with religious movements; under the Asmoneans, Jesus would probably have been arrested at his first step. An innovator, in such a state of society, incurred no danger but that of death, and for those who labour for the future, death is kind. Imagine Jesus required to bear until sixty or seventy years old the burden of his divinity, losing his celestial flame, wearing out little by little under the necessities of an unparalleled position! All things favour those who are signally marked; they go into glory by the sweep of an irresistible and fatal tide.

This sublime person, who each day still presides over the destinies of the world, we may call divine, not in the sense that Jesus absorbed all divinity, or was equal to it (to employ the scholastic expression), but in this sense that Jesus is that individual who has caused his species to make the greatest advance towards the divine. Humanity as a whole presents an assemblage of beings, low, selfish, superior to the animal only in this that their selfishness is more premeditated. But in the midst of this uniform vulgarity, pillars rise towards heaven and attest a more noble destiny. Jesus is the highest of these pillars which show to man whence he came and whither he should tend. In him is condensed all that is good and lofty in our nature. He was not sinless; he conquered the same passions which we combat; no angel of God comforted him, save his good conscience; no Satan tempted him, save that which each bears in his heart. And as manyof the grand aspects of his character are lost to us by the fault of his disciples, it is probable also that many of his faults have been dissembled. But never has any man made the interests of humanity predominate in his life over the littleness of self-love so much as he. Devoted without reserve to his idea, he subordinated everything to it to such a degree that towards the end of his life, the universe no longer existed for him. It was by this flood of heroic will that he conquered heaven. There never was a man, Sakya-Moiini perhaps excepted, who so completely trampled under foot family, the joys of the world, and all temporal cares. He lived only for his Father, and for the divine mission which he believed it was his to fulfil.

As for us, eternal children, condemned to weakness, we who labour without harvesting, and shall never see the fruit of what we have sown, let us bow before these demigods. They knew what we do not know: to create, to affirm, to act. Shall originality be born anew, or shall the world henceforth be content to follow the paths opened by the bold creators of the ancient ages? We know not. But whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; his legend will call forth tears without end; his sufferings will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim that among the sons of men there is none born greater than Jesus.

Michelangelo Buonarroti, *The Last Judgement,* 1536-1541.
Fresco, 12.2 x 13.7 m.
Sistine Chapel, Vatican City.

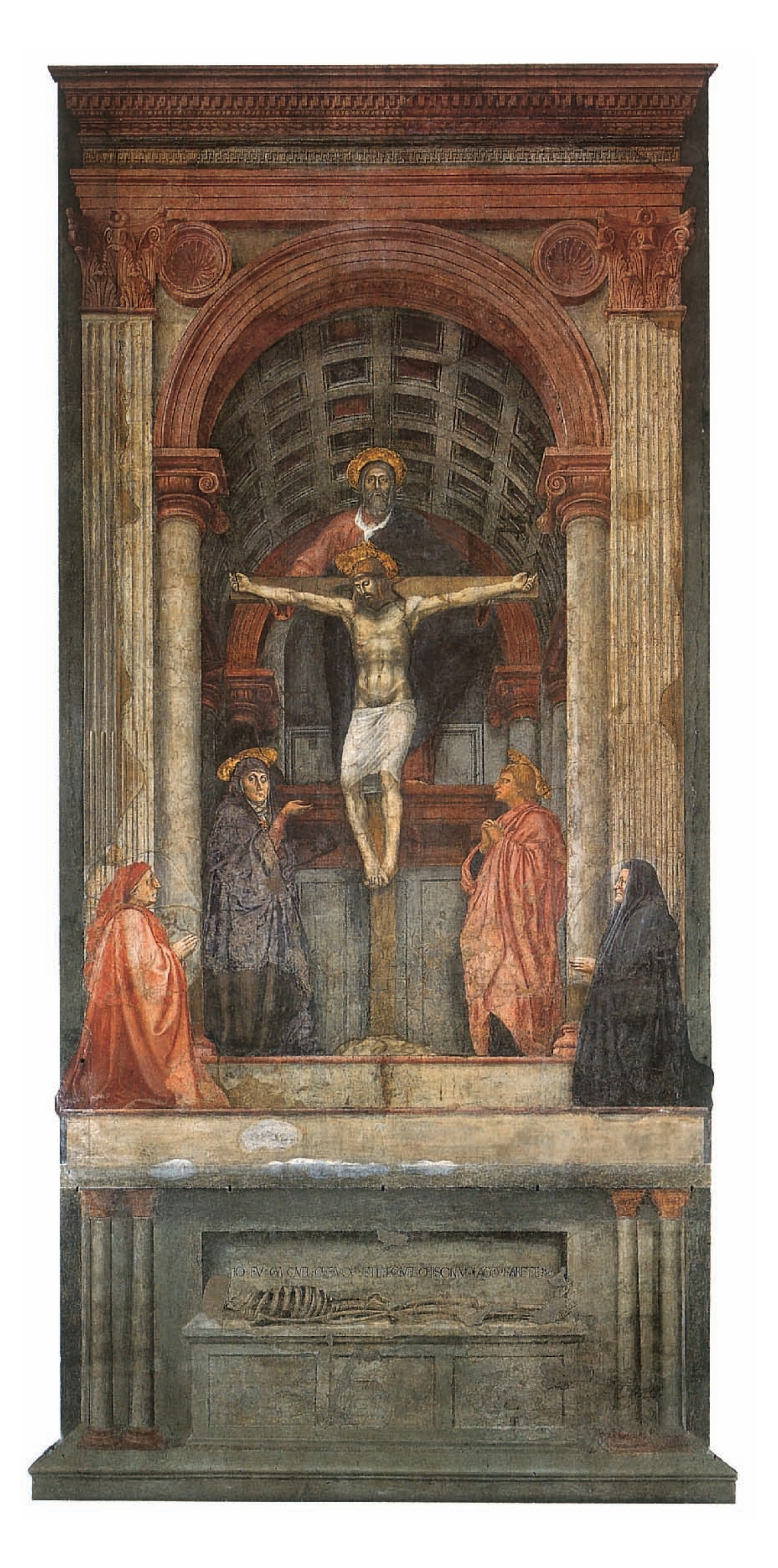

IONAS



Andrea Mantegna, *The Lamentation over the Dead Christ*, 1490.
Tempera on canvas, 68 x 81 cm.
Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan.

Masaccio, *The Holy Trinity*, c. 1428.
Freco, 667 x 317 cm.
Santa Maria Novella, Florence





Bibliography

The Koran, 1st ed. George Sale. Philadelphia: J.W. Moore, 1850.

The New and Old Testaments of Our Lord and Saviour. New York: American Book Exchange, 1881.

The Talmud. Joseph Barclay. London: John Murray, 1878.

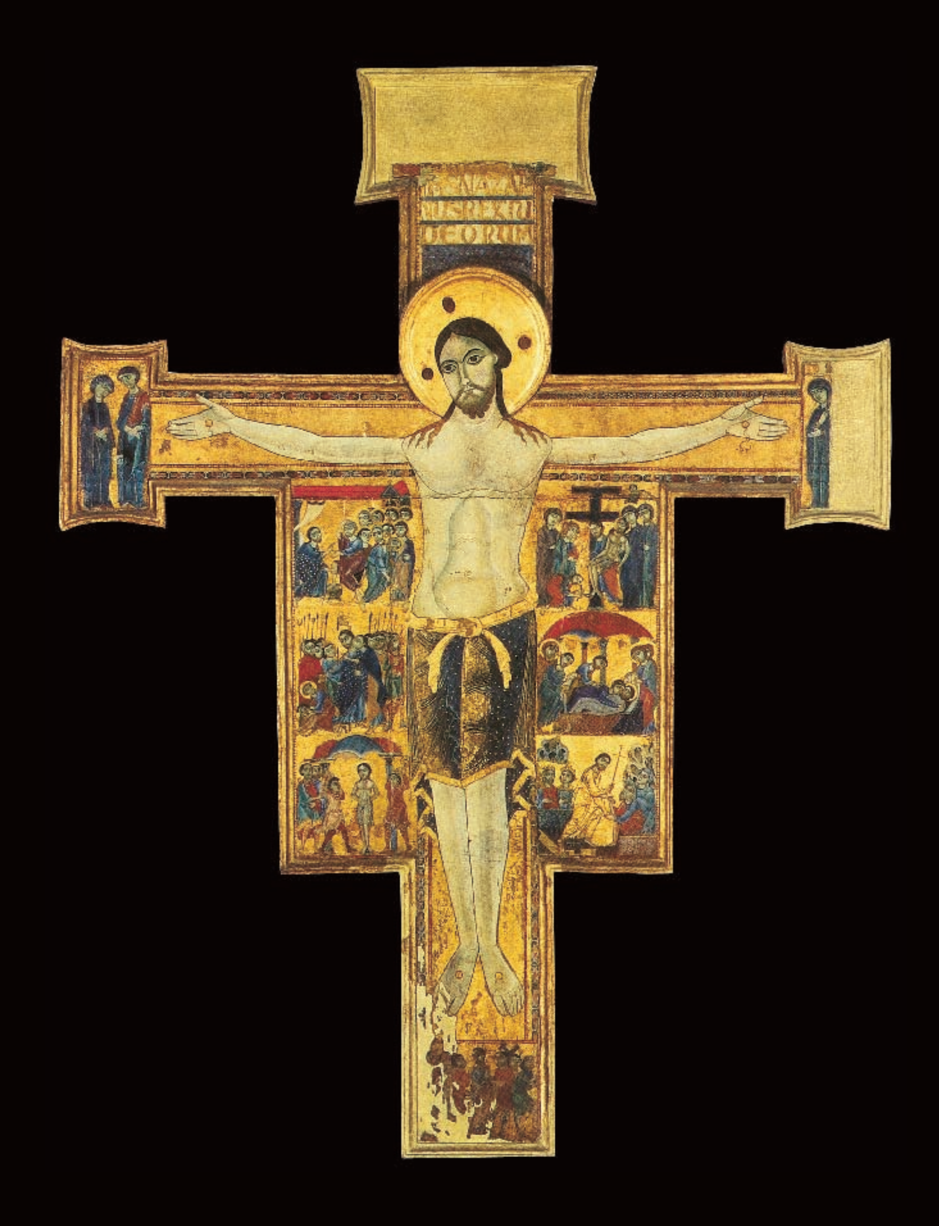
Renan, Ernest. *Histoire générale et système comparé des langues Sémitiques.* 5th ed. 1, Chalmann Lévy. Paris: Ancienne Maison Michel Lévy - Frères, 1878.

Renan, Ernest. *The Life of Jesus.* 1st ed. New York: Carleton, 1864.

Renan, Ernest. *Studies in Religious History.* London: William Heinemann, 1893.

Strauss, David Friedrich. *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined.* 2nd ed. New York: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1892.

List of Illustrations



Since the dawn of Christianity, artists have been fascinated and stirred by the figure of Christ. His likeness appears in frescoes on the walls of catacombs that date from Roman times; he is featured in the stained glass windows of Gothic churches; and he can be found in various forms in today's pop culture. The Biblical Saviour is not a static, immaterial deity: Christ's mortal birth, unusual life and dramatic death make him an accessible subject for religious and secular artists alike. Whether they show the spirituality of God Incarnate or the earthly characteristics of a flesh-and-blood man, artistic depictions of Christ are the most controversial, moving or inspirational examples of religious art.

This richly illustrated book explores the various ways that Christ is rendered in art, from Giotto di Bondone's Madonna Ognissanti and Fra Angelico's paintings of the Crucifixion to the provocative portraits of Salvador Dalí. Author Ernest Renan guides the reader through the most iconic representations of Christ in art — tender or graphic, classical or bizarre, these images of the Messiah reveal the diverse roles of the Son of God in the social milieus and personal lives of the artists.